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THE BABA OF ISPAHAN

JAMES MORIER



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ENGLISH CLASSICS

EDITED BY W. E. HENLEY

HAJJI BABA OF ISPAHAN

BY JAMES MORIER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY E. G. BROWNE, M.A.

I



20 No. 100, 101, 102

James Morier.

WALTON & BECKETT

THE HISTORY OF
THE
EMPIRE
OF
INDIA
BY
JAMES MILL.

INDIA.

VOL. I.

CHICAGO
SERIES AND PUBLISHED
1857

LONDON: ADLPHI, KNIGHTS, 1857.



THE ADVENTURES OF
HAJJI BABA
OF ISPAHAN

BY
JAMES MORIER

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

CHICAGO
STONE AND KIMBALL
1895

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INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH the principal function of a work of fiction is to entertain, to describe *Hajji Baba* merely as an entertaining story would be to give a most inadequate idea of its value. The amusement which it affords to the ordinary novel-reader, who seeks from its perusal nothing beyond amusement, is, moreover, amply attested by the favourable reception accorded to the book on its first appearance in 1824, and by the several editions (in 1828, 1835, 1856, 1863, etc.) which have since been called for. It has long been ranked amongst standard English novels, nor is it likely to be displaced so long as the English nation is able to appreciate good literature. Every cultivated Englishman who has not read *Hajji Baba* (if, indeed, the Englishman who has read it not can, in the full meaning of the term, be described as cultivated) should at once proceed to remedy this defect in his education. If he be a normally constituted person, with a reasonably well-developed sense of humour, he will hardly lay the book aside until he has finished it. If, on the other hand, he be one of those unhappy few who cannot read it, he will assuredly not read this preface, and any attempt here made to bring him to a better state of mind would certainly miscarry. To insist further on this attribute of the book is, therefore, altogether unnecessary.

Considered merely as a piece of fiction, *Hajji Baba* has many rivals; considered as a faithful picture of the living East (as opposed to the purely imaginary and unreal East of Moore and Southey), it has none. Indeed, I might almost venture to assert that never has any writer of any nation succeeded in

portraying, not merely the manners, customs, and forms of speech, but the character and modes of thought, of an alien race, as Morier has portrayed the Persians in his immortal pages. To appreciate his incomparable book as it deserves, one must at least be fairly intimate with both the Persians and their language; and the greater the intimacy, the greater will be the appreciation. Dr. Wills, in his *In the Land of the Lion and the Sun*, has a few words so much to the point that they may well be repeated here. 'Colonel G——,' he writes (*loc. cit.*, p. 3), 'certainly took great trouble to explain to me all about the country, and, taking me out to lunch with him, bought me Morier's *Hajji Baba*, saying, "when you read this you will know more of Persia and the Persians than you will if you had lived there with your eyes open for twenty years." This is going a long way; it is seventeen years since I went to Persia, and I read *Hajji Baba* now, and still learn something new from it. As Persia was in Morier's time so it is now; and, though one sees plenty of decay, there is very little change.' Every word of Dr. Wills' encomium will be indorsed by all competent critics, and the traditional piece of counsel to intending travellers in Persia, 'Take an English saddle, and a copy of *Hajji Baba*,' remains the best that can be given.

The writer's acquaintance with Morier's hero dates from '87, a year remarkable for the multitude of foreigners which the festivities of the Jubilee had assembled in London from the most distant parts of the earth. Amongst these was a hypochondriacal nobleman of Shíráz, who, attended by a most picturesque and companionable dervish and a steward and factotum of unnecessary astuteness, came to London to see whether our physicians could deal with his neuralgia more effectively than their French *confrères*. As none of these three Persians had any knowledge of English, and as the interpreters of the Persian Legation were at that time much

occupied with other and more important matters, the task of piloting them through the labyrinths of London was on several occasions delegated to me. Instructive, and sometimes amusing as it was, it was not without an element of tediousness; and I was glad enough to escape for a few days' quiet into the country, where I spent my leisure hours in reading first the English and then the Persian *Adventures of Hajji Baba*. My recent experiences caused me at this time to think the former better than the latter, but this was because I then knew only the Persian abroad, and not the Persian at home. Both are drawn by Morier to the life; and if, in this country, the Persian *Adventures* be more generally admired than the companion volume, it is rather on account of the greater novelty of incident and variety of scene which they present than for any other reason.

The esteem in which *Hajji Baba* is held by the man of affairs, be he diplomatist, doctor, or traveller, whose steps are directed by destiny towards the Íránian land, is not greater than that which it commands from the scholar, or the student of Antiquity. In proof of this assertion let it suffice me to say, that so great an Orientalist as Professor Nöldeke, in the preface to his classical *History of the Sasanian Dynasty*, freely acknowledges his indebtedness to Morier's romance. 'Aus Morier's *Hajji Baba*' (these are his words) 'kann man auch für das alte Persien sehr viel lernen!' And in one of the notes to his translation of that remarkable relic of pre-Mohammedan Persian fiction, the *Kárnámak-i-Artakhshír-i-Pápakán*, or Romantic History of Ardashír the First, founder of the Sásánian Dynasty, he further remarks, 'Auch in den persischen Heroen steckt immer wieder der edle Hajji Baba.' And yet, in justice to the Persians, a people which, with all its faults, possesses many lovable, some admirable, and a few truly great and noble qualities, it is only fair to say that, thoroughly true

to nature as Hajji Baba is, he is but one type, though a common one, of his many-sided countrymen. True, he is not altogether bad, and is very far from being wholly detestable; yet his least exacting admirers could scarce, without irony, describe his character as noble. Let not the reader, then, be so far carried away by the charm of Morier's pages as to lay down the book in the belief that every Persian is a Hajji Baba, a Mirza Ahmak, or a Mulla Nadan. Morier, it must be remembered, though he obtained an extraordinary insight into the life of all sorts and conditions of Persians, lived chiefly at the Court, and mixed most freely with the official classes. Not amongst these, as a rule, would one seek for the noblest types of national character. '*Darya bi-rúy-i-áb bar árad habáb-rá*' ('The ocean brings the bubble to the surface') says one of their own poets; and the reply which Sa'di places in the mouth of a sage, invited by a king to become his Prime Minister, fairly represents the view which most thoughtful Persians take of a political career. 'I cannot dispense with your services,' says the King, 'for a wise man is needed to discharge duties so important.' 'The proof of his wisdom,' retorted the sage, 'would be, that on no conditions would he consent to undertake them.'

Having said thus much about the book, it behoves me, before entering into further details, to say something about the author. Here, I confess, I find myself in a difficulty, since I can add nothing to the admirable notice contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography* (vol. xxxix. pp. 51-52: London, '94) by Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole, whose knowledge was derived not only from published documents, but from private information also. This much acknowledged, I proceed to note, for my reader's sake, that the Moriers were a Huguenot family, which, on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, migrated to Château d'Oex in Switzerland.

Some of them engaged in commerce at Smyrna, where, in August 1750, Isaac Morier, the father of James, was born. At the age of twenty-five he married Clara van Lennep, daughter of the Dutch Consul-General, by whom he had four sons, John Philip (*b.* 1776, *d.* 1853), James Justinian (the author of *Hajji Baba*, *b.* about 1780, *d.* 1849), David Richard (*b.* 1784, *d.* 1877); and William (*b.* 1790, *d.* 1864), all of whom subsequently attained distinction, the first three as diplomatists, the last as a naval officer. Isaac Morier, their father, came to England, naturalised himself a British subject, and sent his three younger sons to Harrow; but, by the loss of his fortune, was compelled to return to the East. There, in 1804, he became the first Consul-General of the Levant Company at Constantinople, a post which, two years later, was converted into that of his Britannic Majesty's consul. He died of the plague at Constantinople in 1817.

For accounts of the distinguished careers of Isaac Morier's eldest son, John Philip, of his third son, David Richard (the father of Sir Robert Morier, lately ambassador at St. Petersburg, who died a year ago, on Nov. 16th, 1893), and of his youngest son, William, I must refer the reader to Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole's admirable monographs in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and confine myself to that of James Justinian. Born at Smyrna, and, as mentioned above, educated at Harrow, he would appear, from a passage occurring at p. 99 of his *Second Journey*, to have returned to his native place about the year 1800. To judge by the *Introductory Epistle* prefixed to this volume of *Hajji Baba's Adventures*, he would seem to have been in Constantinople in the early part of the year 1807. One cannot, it is true, in reading this *Epistle*, altogether exclude from the mind a suspicion that Dr. Fundgruben, 'Chaplain to the Swedish Embassy at the Ottoman Porte,' and author of 'that very luminous work, entitled *The Biography of*

Celebrated Mummies, had no more real existence than Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh of Weissnichtwo; yet this suspicion does not affect Morier's very explicit reference to a sojourn of some length which he made in Constantinople 'sixteen years ago.' Now as the *Epistle* is dated 1823, this visit to the Turkish capital must have taken place in 1807; and, since Morier sailed from Portsmouth for Persia on October 27, 1807, in the early part of that year.

Leaving this doubtful and comparatively unimportant point, I pass to a period of Morier's life of which he himself has given the fullest and most detailed account in his *Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople in the years 1808 and 1809*, a large folio of 438 pages, published in 1812. Sir Harford Jones' mission to the Persian Court, to which he was attached in the capacity of private secretary, sailed from Portsmouth in H.M.S. *Sapphire* on October 27, 1807, and proceeded by way of Madeira and the Cape of Good Hope to Bombay, where it arrived on April 26, 1808. Here Sir Harford and his suite were detained for exactly five months; and it was not till October 13, 1808, nearly a year after their departure from England, that they finally landed at Bushire. In this least attractive of Persian towns they were further delayed till December 17th, when, attended by Muhammad Zakí Khán as *mihmándár*, they finally set out for the capital. Besides Sir Harford Jones and Morier, the mission consisted of Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Bruce, Captain Sutherland, Cornet Willock, Dr. Jukes, and five European servants (two English, two Swiss, and one Portuguese). They reached Shíráz on December 30, visiting the interesting ruins of Shápúr (which Morier describes very fully) on the way; and quitted it again on January 13, 1809, for Ispahán, which they entered on January 31. Here they remained but one week before continuing their journey to Tehrán, where they arrived on

February 14, 1809. Morier's stay in the Persian capital was somewhat less than three months, for, in company with Mírzá Abu'l-Hasan, the Persian Envoy Extraordinary to the English Court, he set out thence on his homeward journey on May 7th, 1809, this day being deemed auspicious by the Persians as being the anniversary of the detested Omar's assassination. He reached Constantinople, travelling overland by way of Tabríz, Erzeroum, and Amasia, on the 18th of July; sailed from Smyrna, in company with the Persian Ambassador, on September 7; and finally landed in England on November 25, 1809.

No lengthened period of repose was granted to Morier. Within eight months of his return (on July 18, 1810) he again sailed for Persia, attached to the mission of Sir Gore Ouseley, and accompanied by the Persian Ambassador, Mírzá Abu'l-Hasan, and his suite. The presence of the volatile Persians relieved the monotony of the tedious and protracted voyage, and supplied Morier with plenty of good material for the second part of *Hajji Baba*. The two missions, after a sojourn of three weeks at Bombay, finally reached Bushire on March 1, 1811. The constitution of the English mission was as follows:—Sir Gore Ouseley, his wife and child; Sir William Ouseley; the Hon. Robert Gordon; and Morier; with two clerks, three man-servants, and two maid-servants, all English. The Persian Ambassador was accompanied by eight attendants. It is unnecessary to trace in detail the events of Morier's second visit to Persia, or to follow the progress of the important negotiations with which the English mission was intrusted. Enough to say that, on Sir Gore Ouseley's return to England in 1814, Morier was left in charge of the Embassy at Tehrán. A year later, after a residence of more than six years in the country, he received his letter of recall. On December 17, 1816, he once more completed the overland journey to Constantinople,

whence he returned to London, and received from the government a retiring pension.

Save for two years' special service in Mexico ('24-'26), his diplomatic career was now at an end, and the remainder of his life was passed in literary ease. His *Second Journey through Persia* appeared in 1818, and was followed in 1824 by the Persian, and in 1828 by the English, *Adventures of Hajji Baba*. These were by far his best works, and on them rests his reputation as a writer of fiction, and an observer of men and lands. If we except *Zohrab the Hostage* ('32 or '33) and *Ayesha the Maid of Kars* ('34), it may safely be said that of the remainder scarce even the titles are known, save to the curious in such matters. A full list of them is given by Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole, and to this I refer such persons as may be tempted by the perusal of *Hajji Baba* to extend their acquaintance with our author beyond the works above enumerated. Yet it must be said that, though Morier lived for fifteen years after the publication of *Ayesha*, and during that time composed at least five other works of fiction, it is doubtful if his literary reputation was at all increased thereby.

To return to the *Travels*. There is as much difference between the two volumes, in point of interest, as between the two visits to Persia which they describe. The First Journey was, after all, a flying visit; and it is doubtful how far Morier was at this time conversant with the Persian tongue. That he was fluent enough in Turkish is not merely probable from a consideration of the circumstances of his youth, but is proved by his remark (p. 20) that he made the *Nasakchí-Báshí* a civil speech in that language. Some knowledge of Persian he undoubtedly acquired very rapidly; yet, though he reports the substance of conversations conducted in it (with which, however, he may have been subsequently acquainted by Sir Harford Jones, whose fluency in Persian

excited the admiration of Fath-'Alí Sháh himself), I find in the narrative of this First Journey no explicit statement that he was able to speak it at all readily. Indeed, at p. 248, he expressly disavows any such intimacy with the literature and amusements of the people as would justify him in attempting to delineate the national character. Of the Persians, however, it is evident that he had formed a very high opinion. 'I am sure,' says he (p. 366), 'that if the Persians had possessed as much communication with Europeans as the Turks have had, they would at this day not only have adopted many of our customs, but, with their natural quickness, would have rivalled us in our own arts and sciences.' It will be inferred that, notwithstanding its incontestable value, Morier's account of his First Journey is instructive rather than amusing. With the narrative of his Second Journey the case is altogether different. From the many entertaining anecdotes which he relates, the scraps of folklore which he records, the lengthy conversations which he reports, and the quotations from Sa'dí and Háfiz which he occasionally introduces, it is evident that his acquaintance with colloquial and with literary Persian is extensive and profound. The linguistic attainments of the mission were, indeed, of a high order, for Sir Gore Ouseley's Persian (p. 56) amazed and delighted the Shírázis, and where are judges of good Persian to be found if not at Shíráz? That, however, was at a time when any really remarkable proficiency in Persian was less apt than now to secure the speedy and permanent transference of its possessor (if he be in the service of the English government) to Spain, Zanzibar, the Dutch East Indies, or any other region remote from Persia.

Books of travel based on journals, even at the best, are, as none know better than those who have had occasion to write them, apt to retain somewhat of the disconnectedness and

discursiveness inseparable from a diary, or, in plain language, to present a considerable proportion of dull pages. Morier himself, if we may judge by his *Introductory Epistle* to the author of *Celebrated Mummies*, must have felt this, and, to quote his own words, he determined to remedy it by 'collecting so many facts and anecdotes of actual life as would illustrate the different stations and ranks which compose a Mussulman community, and then working them into one connected narrative, upon the plan of that excellent picture of European life, *Gil Blas of Le Sage*.' Hajji Baba's *Adventures*, the outcome of this excellent idea, displays genius of the very highest order. It contains not merely the cream of the author's two great folio volumes of travels, but the cream of all volumes of Persian travel, and a great deal besides; all assorted and arranged in a continuous narrative of sustained and unflagging interest with a consummate skill to which it is difficult to accord a bare meed of praise without incurring the risk of being charged by some incompetent and indiscriminating critic with an exaggerated enthusiasm which is in his eyes the worst of faults.

Very few, if any, of the incidents in Hajji Baba's career could be characterised as improbable; most of them will be easily paralleled by any one who has some knowledge of Persian life and literature; and many are, as is evident from a perusal of the two volumes of *Travels*, drawn directly from Morier's own recollections. Amongst the latter I may cite as examples the performance of the water-carrier in ch. ix. (*First Journey*, p. 195; *Second Journey*, p. 180); the history of *Hazrat-i-Íshán* and his inexhaustible caldron in ch. xi. (*Second Journey*, p. 380); the chief executioner's remark in ch. xv. of Book ii., 'If there were no dying in the case, how the Persians would fight!' (*Second Journey*, p. 215); and the method of exorcising *ghúls* recommended by the old Isfahání in ch. x. of Book ii. (*Second*

Journey, p. 108). The characters are manifestly drawn from life, but they are characters created by Morier, not caricatures of actual personages. On this point the author, in his Introduction to *Hajji Baba in England*, is quite explicit. 'Here,' says he, 'I beg to disclaim personality of any kind. The letter above cited . . . shows how easily an individual will take a character to himself, which, although it may fit in some parts, yet does not on the whole; and is no more presented as a finished portrait than taking a nose from one person, a mouth from another, and the eyes from a third, to make up a whole face, can be called the likeness of either of those who have only contributed a feature. And should you, my reader, perchance alight upon some trait which you may recollect, do not immediately exclaim, "This is Mr. Such-a-one," or, "That must be Lady This"; believe me, you will form imperfect conclusions.' And, indeed, to introduce definite individuals, even if inhabitants of a distant country, as *Mirzá Ahmak* ('Doctor Fool'), *Námard Khán* ('Lord Coward'), *Eshek Mirzá* ('Prince Donkey'), or *Mullá Nádán* ('the Reverend Ignoramus'), would be personality of a type not less pronounced than indefensible. It is true that the history of the poet *Asker* is expressly stated by the author to have been suggested in part by the life of Fath-'Alí Khán, at one time poet-laureate; but even here the resemblance is only partial, and the character is quite inoffensive.

This brings me to another point. In the Introduction to *Hajji Baba in England* is inserted an extremely quaint letter of remonstrance, which purports to have been addressed to Morier on the subject of *Hajji Baba* by one of his Persian friends high in office. This letter seems generally to have been taken *au grand sérieux*. Thus, in Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature* (ed. 1860, vol. ii. p. 496) it is said that 'the truth of his [Morier's] satirical descriptions and allusions was felt even by the Court of Persia; for Mr. Morier published

a letter from a minister of state in that country, expressing the displeasure which the King felt at the "very foolish business" of the book'; and Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole writes: 'So accurate was his delineation of Persian life and character that the Persian minister at St. James's is said to have remonstrated on behalf of his government with the plain speaking and satire of *Hajji Baba*.' Now, there may be some proof of this with which I am not acquainted, but, in default thereof, it certainly seems to me more probable that the letter in question is of a piece with the *Epistle to the Reverend Dr. Fundgruben*, or the original Persian text of Hajji Baba's diary, from which the English is professedly a translation. To quote once more the author's own words in reply to his indignant but—unless I greatly err—imaginary, Persian friend:—'*You say Hajji Baba all lies. To be sure all lies. Thousand and one Nights all lies. All Persian story-books lies; but nobody angry about them.*' It might also be thought that a high Persian official, especially in addressing one who was conversant with his own language, would scarcely venture on an English letter of remonstrance, unless he could hope to produce something less essentially comical than the document in question. Of this, however, I am not so sure; for the following letter, which actually appeared in *The Pall Mall Gazette* of Nov. 26, '91, and which, as I think my readers will agree, deserves to be rescued from oblivion, is no whit less quaint. It was called forth by some very violent attacks on the Shah, written by Sheykh Jamálu'd-Dín 'the Afghan' (he is said to have been really a native of Hamadán in Persia), a man of great talent, but a terrible fire-brand. This is the reply his attacks evoked:—'SIR,—Accidentally I have seen an article about Persia and Schah of Persia of 16 instant. As I am Persian and I know Persia and Schah of Persia very well, and it is not yet long time that I have left Persia, I could not find that article to be true or seemed

to be true, therefore it seems to me that the author of that article is a fool or is not written by gentleman, but a dog has made some bow-wow, and has vomited on the paper. But I must tell you that bow-wow of one or two dogs never can prevent a Caravan to pass, and a large sea never agitated by throwing a stone: Schah of Persia is very well known of the whole world.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

November 22.

MIRZA ALI ASGHAR.'

The Persians, though a vain people, and peculiarly sensitive to ridicule, are by no means lacking in a sense of humour; and, should a Persian translation of *Hajji Baba* ever appear, it is probable that it would cause them on the whole as much amusement as annoyance. Such, at least, was the opinion of a learned Persian of my acquaintance, with whom, till lately, I maintained a correspondence on literary topics; for, in one of his letters, written rather more than two years ago, I find a paragraph of which this is the translation. 'That accomplished writer Mírzá Habíb of Isfahán¹ has translated the book of *Hajji Baba* from the French (*sic*) into Persian very literally, with especial regard to the preservation of those local and characteristic peculiarities and idioms which mark the speech of the common people of Isfahán and other Persian towns, thus giving, as it were, a living representation of the customs of the Persians. He wished to print it in Constantinople, but the Censor of the Press would not permit this. If you would like it, I will send a copy for you. If you could get it printed in London, it would find many purchasers and readers in Persia, and Mírzá Habíb would make over all his rights to you, and

¹ A well-known scholar and writer, one of the most erudite and accomplished of his contemporaries. He published a number of valuable works, edited several rare and interesting Persian texts (as the gastronomic poems of 'Bushák,' and the verses of Mahmúd Kárf, the poet of clothes), and died soon after this letter was written.

be perfectly satisfied if he could secure the publication of the book.' Unfortunately I was not in a position to take advantage of this offer, an inability which I much regretted, for *Hajji Baba* in Persian would be perfectly delightful, and ought to eclipse entirely *Huseyn the Kurd*, *The Mouse and the Cat*, and the *Thousand and one Nights*. Even in English the Persian idiom is so well preserved that the characters almost seem to speak in their native tongue. 'I beg leave to represent for your service' (*Khidmat-i-shumá 'arz mí-kunam*); 'it has not yet reached my understanding' (*hanúz bi-'aklam na-rasída-ast*); 'your brain has dried up' (*damágh-i-shumá khushk shuda-ast*);—these, and many more expressions, irresistibly recall the very living speech of Persia. Very seldom do we catch the author tripping,—not more than three or four times, perhaps, in the whole book, and that only in minor details, as, for instance, where (ch. ii.) he makes a Sunni 'curse Ali' (which no Sunni would think of doing); represents Aslan Sultan the Turcoman (who, as we learn from ch. vi. knew no Persian) make use of the peculiarly Persian expression 'I'll burn your father'; transforms (in ch. xx.) Avicenna (which is nothing more than a corruption of Ibn Síná) into 'Abou Avicenna'; and corrupts *kabk-i-derí* (royal partridge) into 'partridge of the valley' (*deré*). Some diligence is needed to collect even this modest list of errors, most of which are, moreover, quite immaterial.

It may well be asked 'if you have so few criticisms to make, why write what is supposed to be a critical Introduction at all?' A very pertinent question; to which I can only reply '*el ma'múr ma'zúr*' (he who acts under orders is excused). With the editing of the text I have not been charged; that will stand, I believe, as it stands in the second edition. As to the utility of any sort of introduction, even were it a much better one than this, I have my doubts; though the honour of having one's name associated, even in so humble a capacity, with the great

Morier is a temptation calculated to overcome stronger scruples than mine. '*Bar dasta-i-gul níz bi-bandand giyá-rá*' (Even grass may serve to tie up a bunch of roses); yet, nevertheless—

*'Hamí sharm dáram ki pá-yi malakh-rá
Su-i-bárgáh-i-Suleymán firistam;
Hamí tarsam az rishkhand-i-riyáhin
Ki khár-i-mughílán bi-bustán firistam.'*

'This grasshopper's foot to the Court of Suleyman
It shames me to send, and I ask for his pardon;
I fear to imagine the scorn which the myrtles
Will feel for this thorn which I add to their garden.'

E. G. BROWNE.

THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION

My esteemed and learned friend, whom I have anagrammatised as the Doctor Fundgruben, having intimated to me that however flattered he might have felt, upon seeing his name prefixed to the first Edition of Hajji Baba, yet, so retiring are his habits, and so little ambitious is he of being noticed, that he has requested of me to abstain for the future from making use of his name in so public a manner.

I have not hesitated one moment in complying with his request, but as some prologue is necessary to the narrative which follows, I must beg leave to relate an adventure which, on my return from Persia, befell me at Tocat, and which gave rise to the following work.

It was at the close of a fatiguing day's journey, that I and my escort, consisting of two Tartars, two servants, and the conductors of our baggage and post-horses, entered that city. Our approach was as usual announced by the howls of the *Surujees* or guides, who, I suppose, more than usually exerted their lungs in my service, because they felt that these sounds, the harbingers of rest and entertainment, could not but be agreeable to weary and jaded travellers like ourselves. The moon was shining bright as our cavalcade was clattering over the long paved road leading to the city, and lighted up, in awful grandeur, the turret-topped peaks of the surrounding crags. On entering the post-house, I was immediately conducted into the travellers' room, where, having disencumbered

myself of my cloak, arms, and heavy boots, and putting myself at ease in my slippers and loose dress, I quietly enjoyed the cup of strong coffee and the *chibouk*, or amber-headed pipe, which were immediately handed to me, and after that my dish of rice, my tough fowl, and my basin of sour curds.

I was preparing to take my night's rest on the sofas of the post-house, where my bed had been laid, when a stranger unceremoniously walked into the room, and stood before me. I remarked that he was a Persian, and, by his dress, a servant. At any other moment I should have been happy to see and converse with him, because, having lived so long in Persia, I felt myself in some measure identified with its natives, and now in a country where both nations were treated with the same degree of contempt, my fellow-feeling for the sectaries of Ali became infinitely stronger.

I discovered that the stranger had a tale of misery to unfold, from the very doleful face that he was pleased to make on the occasion, and I was not mistaken. It was this—that his master, one Mirza Hajj Baba, now on his return from Constantinople, where he had been employed on the Shah's business, had fallen seriously ill, and that he had been obliged to stop at Tocat,—that he had taken up his abode at the caravanserai, where he had already spent a week, during which time he had been attended by a Frank doctor, an inhabitant of Tocat, who, instead of curing, had in fact brought him to his last gasp,—that, having heard of my arrival from Persia, he had brightened up, and requested, without loss of time, that I would call upon him, for he was sure the presence of one coming from his own country would alone restore him to health. In short, his servant, as is usual on such occasions, finished his speech by saying, that, with the exception of God and myself, he had nothing left to depend upon in this life.

I immediately recollected who Mirza Hajj Baba was; for although I had lost sight of him for several years, yet once on a time I had seen much of him, and had taken great interest in everything that regarded him, owing to his having been in England, whither, in quality of secretary, he had accompanied

the first ambassador which Persia had sent in modern times. He had since been employed in various ways in the government, sometimes in high and sometimes in lower situations, undergoing the vicissitudes which attend every Persian, and at length had been sent to Constantinople as resident agent at the Porte.

I did not hesitate an instant, though tired and jaded, to accompany his servant; and in the same garb in which I was, only throwing a cloak over my shoulders, I walked in all haste to the caravanserai.

There, on a bed laid in the middle of a small room, surrounded by several of his servants, I found the sick Mirza, looking more like a corpse than a living body. When I had first known him he was a remarkably handsome man, with a fine aquiline nose, oval face, an expressive countenance, and a well-made person. He had now passed the meridian of life, but his features were still fine, and his eye was full of fire. He recognised me as soon as seen, and the joy which he felt at the meeting broke out in a great animation of his features, and in the thousand exclamations so common in a Persian's mouth.

'See,' said he, 'what a fortunate destiny is mine, that at a moment when I thought the angel of death was about to seize me for his own, the angel of life comes and blows a fresh existence into my nostrils!'

After his first transports were over, I endeavoured to make him explain what was the nature of his complaint, and how it had hitherto been treated. I saw well enough by his saffron hue, that bile was the occasion of his disorder, and as I had had great experience in treating it during my stay in Persia, I did not hesitate to cheer up his hopes by an assurance of being able to relieve him.

'What can I say?' said he. 'I thought at first that I had been struck with the plague. My head ached intensely, my eyes became dim, I had a pain in my side, and a nauseous taste in my mouth, and expected to die on the third day; but no, the symptoms still continue, and I am alive. As soon as I arrived here, I inquired for a physician, and was told there

were two practitioners in the town, a Jew and a Frank. Of course I chose the latter, but, 'tis plain, that my evil star had a great deal to say in the choice I made. I have not yet been able to discover to what tribe among the Franks he belongs,— certainly he is not an Englishman. But a more extraordinary ass never existed in this world, be his nation what it may. I began by telling him that I was very, very ill. All he said in answer, with a grave face, was, "*Mashallah!* Praise be to God!" and when, in surprise and rage, I cried out, "but I shall die, man!" with the same grave face, he said, "*Inshallah!* Please God!" My servants were about to thrust him from the room, when they found that he knew nothing of our language excepting these two words, which he had only learnt to misapply. Supposing that he still might know something of his profession, I agreed to take his medicine; but I might have saved myself the trouble, for I have been daily getting worse.'

Here the Mirza stopped to take breath. I did not permit him to exert himself further, but, without loss of time, returned to the post-house, applied to my medicine-chest, and prepared a dose of calomel, which was administered that evening with all due solemnity. I then retired to rest.

The next noon I repaired to his bedside, and there, to my great satisfaction, found that my medicine had performed wonders. The patient's eyes were opened, the headache had in great measure ceased, and he was, in short, a different person. I was received by him and his servants with all the honours due to the greatest sage, and they could not collect words sufficiently expressive of their admiration of my profound skill. As they were pouring forth their thanks and gratitude, looking up I saw a strange figure in the room, whose person I must take the liberty to describe, so highly ludicrous and extravagant did it appear. He was of the middle size, rather inclined to be corpulent, with thick black eyebrows, dark eyes, a three days' beard, and mustachios. He wore the Turkish long dress, from his shoulders downwards, yellow *pabouches*, or slippers, a shawl about his waist, and carried a long cane in his hand; but from his shoulders upwards he was a European, with

a neckcloth, his hair dressed in the *aile de pigeon* fashion, a thick tail clubbed, and over all an old-fashioned, three-cornered laced hat. This redoubtable personage made me a bow, and at the same time accosted me in Italian. I was not long in discovering that he was my rival, the doctor, and that he was precisely what, from the description of the Mirza, I expected him to be, viz., an itinerant quack, who perhaps might once have mixed medicines in some apothecary's shop in Italy or Constantinople, and who had now set up for himself, in this remote corner of Asia, where he might physic and kill at his pleasure.

I did not shrink from his acquaintance, because I was certain that the life and adventures of such a person must be highly curious and entertaining, and I cordially encouraged him in his advances, hoping thus to acquire his confidence.

He very soon informed me who he was, and what were his pursuits, and did not seem to take the least umbrage at my having prescribed for his patient without previously consulting him. His name was Ludovico Pestello, and he pretended to have studied at Padua, where he had got his diploma. He had not long arrived at Constantinople, with the intention of setting up for himself, when, finding that the city overflowed with Esculapii, he was persuaded to accompany a Pasha of two tails to Tocat, who had recently been appointed to its government, and was there now established as his body-physician. I suspected this story to be a fabrication, and undertook to examine his knowledge of physic, particularly in the case of my friend the Persian Mirza. The galimatias which he poured out, as we proceeded, were so extremely ridiculous, and he puzzled himself so entirely by his answers to the plain questions which I put, that, at length, not being able to proceed, he joined, most good-naturedly, in the horse laugh, from which I could not refrain. I made him candidly confess that he knew nothing of medicine, more than he had acquired from having been servant to a doctor of some eminence at Padua, where he had picked up a smattering; and that, as all his patients were heretics and abominable Mussulmans, he never could feel any remorse for

those which during his practice he had despatched from this world. 'But, *caro Signor Dottore,*' said I, 'how in the name of all that is sacred, how have you managed hitherto not to have had your bones broken? Turks are dangerous tools to play with.'

'Oh,' said he, in great unconcern, 'the Turks believe anything, and I take care never to give them medicine that can do harm.'

'But you must have drugs, and you must apply them,' said I. 'Where are they?'

'I have different coloured liquids,' said he, 'and as long as there is bread and water to be had I am never at a loss for a pill. I perform all my cures with them, accompanied by the words *Inshallah* and *Mashallah!*'

'Bread and water! wonderful!' did I exclaim.

'*Signor, si,*' said he, 'I sprinkle my pills with a little flour for the common people, cover them with gold leaf for my higher patients, the Agas and the Pasha, and they all swallow them without even a wry face.'

I was so highly amused by the account which this extraordinary fellow gave of himself, of the life he led, and of the odd adventures which he had met with, that I invited him to dine; and were it not for the length which this advertisement has already run, I should perhaps have thought it right to make my readers partake of my entertainment by retailing his narrative. I repaid him, as he said, over and above its price by presents from my medicine-chest, which he assured me would be amply sufficient to administer relief to the whole of Asia Minor.

I could not think of leaving the poor Persian in such hands; and feeling that I might be the means of saving his life, I determined to remain at Tocat until I saw him out of danger.

After three days' administration of calomel, Hajjî Baba's complexion was in a great measure restored to its original hue, and as he might now be said to be free from danger, and in a fair way to recovery, I proposed proceeding on my journey. The poor man could not find words for the expression of his

gratitude, and I saw that he was labouring hard to discover a present worthy of my acceptance. At length, just before taking my leave, he desired his servants to leave us alone, and spoke to me in the following words :—

‘You have saved my life; you are my old friend and my deliverer. What can I do to show my gratitude? Of worldly goods I have but few; it is long since I have received any salary from my government, and the little money I have here will barely suffice to take me to my own country. Besides, I know the English,—they are above such considerations, it would be in vain to offer them a pecuniary reward. But I have that by me which, perhaps, may have some value in your eyes—I can assure you that it has in mine. Ever since I have known your nation, I have remarked their inquisitiveness, and eagerness after knowledge. Whenever I have travelled with them, I observed they record their observations in books; and when they return home, thus make their fellow-countrymen acquainted with the most distant regions of the globe. Will you believe me, that I, Persian as I am, have followed their example—hence during the period of my residence at Constantinople I have passed my time in writing a detailed history of my life, which, although that of a very obscure and ordinary individual, is still so full of vicissitude and adventure, that I think it would not fail to create an interest if published in Europe? I offer it to you; and in so doing, I assure you that I wish to show you the confidence I place in your generosity, for I never would have offered it to any one else. Will you accept it?’

I leave the reader to conceive my happiness upon hearing this—upon at length getting into my possession precisely the sort of work which may be well esteemed a desideratum in the history of mankind, and which promised to give not only a detailed picture of Oriental manners, but even contrasted portraits of two very distinct races, into which a great part of the eastern world may be divided; distinct in religion, manners, and natural character, however resembling one another in a sort of general family likeness.

My eyes, I am sure, glistened with pleasure when I expressed my sense of the Mirza's liberality; and as fast as I refused his offer (for I thought it but generous to do so upon the terms he proposed) the more he pressed it upon me.

As a further inducement, he said that he was going back to his country, uncertain if he enjoyed the favour of the Shah; and as he had freely expressed his sentiments, which included his observations upon England, he was afraid, should he be in disgrace, and his work be found upon him, that it might lead to his destruction.

Unable to withstand these entreaties, I acceded to his request, and became the possessor of the manuscript which forms the subject of the following work. I have done my best endeavour to adapt it to the taste of European readers, stripping it of the numerous repetitions, and the tone of exaggeration and hyperbole which pervade the compositions of the Orientals; but still no doubt not only much of that deviation from truth and perversion of chronology which characterise them will be detected, but a sort of 'peregrinity of idiom,' of which, I fear, I have not been able totally to divest it. However, of the matter contained in the book, this I must say, that having lived in the country myself during the time to which it refers, I find that most of the incidents are grounded upon fact, which, although not adhered to with that scrupulous regard to truth which we might expect from a European writer, are yet sufficient to give an insight into manners. Many of them will no doubt appear improbable to those who have never visited the stage upon which they were acted; and it is natural it should be so, because, from the nature of circumstances, such events could only occur in Eastern countries.

A distinct line must ever be drawn between 'the nations who wear the hat and those who wear the beard'; and they must ever hold each other's stories as improbable, until a more general intercourse of common life takes place between them. What is moral and virtuous with the one is wickedness with the other,—that which the Christian reviles as abominable is by the Mohammedan held sacred. Although the contrast

between their respective manners may be very amusing, still it is most certain that the Christian will ever feel devoutly grateful that he is neither subject to Mohammedan rule, nor educated in Mohammedan principles; whilst the latter, in his turn, looking upon the rest of mankind as unclean infidels, will continue to hold fast to his persuasion, until some powerful interposition of Providence shall dispel the moral and intellectual darkness which at present overhangs so large a portion of the Asiatic world.

Fearing to increase the size of the work, I have refrained adding the numerous notes which my long residence in Persia would have enabled me to do, and have only occasionally made explanations necessary to understand the narrative. In the same fear, I have not ventured to take Hajji out of his own country. His remarks upon England during his residence there, and during his travels, may perhaps be thought worthy of future notice; and should they be called for, I will do my best endeavour to interpret his feelings as closely as possible.

P. P.

CHAPTER I

OF HAJJĪ BABA'S BIRTH AND EDUCATION

My father, Kerbelai Hassan, was one of the most celebrated barbers of Ispahan. He was married, when only seventeen years of age, to the daughter of a chandler, who lived in the neighbourhood of his shop; but the connection was not fortunate, for his wife brought him no offspring, and he, in consequence, neglected her. His dexterity in the use of the razor had gained for him, together with no little renown, such great custom, particularly among the merchants, that after twenty years' industry he found he could afford to add a second wife to his harem; and succeeded in obtaining the daughter of a rich money-changer, whose head he had shaved during that period with so much success, that he made no difficulty in granting his daughter to my father. In order to get rid, for a while, of the importunities and jealousy of his first wife, and also to acquire the good opinion of his father-in-law (who, although noted for clipping money, and passing it for lawful, affected to be a saint), he undertook a pilgrimage to the tomb of Hosein, at Kerbelah. He took his new wife with him, and she was delivered of me on the road. Before the journey took place he was generally known simply as 'Hassan the barber'; but ever after he was honoured by the epithet of Kerbelai; and I, to please my mother, who spoilt me, was called Hajjī, or the pilgrim, a name which has stuck to me through life, and procured for me a great deal of unmerited respect; because, in fact, that honoured title is seldom conferred on any but those who have made the great pilgrimage to the tomb of the blessed Prophet of Mecca.

My father having left his business during his absence to his

chief apprentice, resumed it with increased industry on his return; and the reputation of a zealous Mussulman, which he had acquired by his journey, attracted the clergy, as well as the merchants, to his shop. It being intended that I should be brought up to the strap, I should perhaps have received no more education than was necessary to teach me my prayers, had I not been noticed by a mollah, or priest, who kept a school in an adjoining mosque, whom my father (to keep up the character he had acquired of being a good man) used to shave once a week, as he was wont to explain, purely for the love of God. The holy man repaid the service by teaching me to read and write; and I made such progress under his care, that in two years I could decipher the Koran, and began to write a legible hand. When not in school I attended the shop, where I learnt the rudiments of my profession, and when there was a press of customers, was permitted to practise upon the heads of muleteers and camel-drivers, who indeed sometimes paid dear for my first essays.

By the time I was sixteen it would be difficult to say whether I was most accomplished as a barber or a scholar. Besides shaving the head, cleaning the ears, and trimming the beard, I became famous for my skill in the offices of the bath. No one understood better than I the different modes of rubbing or shampooing, as practised in India, Cashmere, and Turkey; and I had an art peculiar to myself of making the joints to crack, and my slaps echo.

Thanks to my master, I had learnt sufficiently of our poets to enable me to enliven conversation with occasional apt quotations from Saadi, Hafiz, etc.; this accomplishment, added to a good voice, made me considered as an agreeable companion by all those whose crowns or limbs were submitted to my operation. In short, it may, without vanity, be asserted that Hajji Baba was quite the fashion among the men of taste and pleasure.

My father's shop being situated near the royal caravanseraï, the largest and most frequented in the city, was the common resort of the foreign, as well as of the resident, merchants; they

not unfrequently gave him something over and above the usual price, for the entertainment they found in the repartees of his hopeful son. One of them, a Bagdad merchant, took great fancy to me, and always insisted that I should attend upon him, in preference even to my more experienced father. He made me converse with him in Turkish, of which I had acquired a slight knowledge, and so excited my curiosity by describing the beauties of the different cities which he had visited, that I soon felt a strong desire to travel. He was then in want of some one to keep his accounts, and as I associated the two qualifications of barber and scribe, he made me such advantageous offers, to enter into his service, that I agreed to follow him; and immediately mentioned my determination to my father. My father was very loth to lose me, and endeavoured to persuade me not to leave a certain profession for one which was likely to be attended with danger and vicissitudes; but when he found how advantageous were the merchant's offers, and that it was not impossible that I might become one myself in time, he gradually ceased to dissuade me from going; and at length gave me his blessing, accompanied by a new case of razors.

My mother's regret for the loss of my society, and her fears for my safety, derived no alleviation from the prospect of my expected future aggrandisement; she augured no good from a career begun in the service of a *Sûni*; ¹ but still, as a mark of her maternal affection, she gave me a bag of broken biscuit, accompanied by a small tin case of a precious unguent, which, she told me, would cure all fractures and internal complaints. She further directed me to leave the house with my face towards the door, by way of propitiating a happy return from a journey undertaken under such inauspicious circumstances.

¹ It is perhaps almost needless to remind the reader, that the Mussulmans are divided into two inimical sects, viz., *Sûni* and *Shiah*; and that the Turks are of the former, and the Persians of the latter persuasion. The *Sûnies* hold that Omar, Osman, and Abubekr, were the lawful successors of Mohammed. The *Shiahs* assert that they were usurpers, and that Ali, his son-in-law, was the next in succession.

CHAPTER II

HAJÍ BABA COMMENCES HIS TRAVELS—HIS ENCOUNTER WITH
THE TURCOMANS, AND HIS CAPTIVITY

OSMAN AGA, my master, was now on a journey to Meshed, the object of which was to purchase the lamb-skins of Bokhara, which he afterwards purposed to convey to Constantinople for sale. Imagine a short, squat man, with a large head, prominent spongy nose, and a thick, black beard, and you will see my fellow-traveller. He was a good Mussulman, very strict in his devotions, and never failed to pull off his stockings even in the coldest morning, to wash his feet, in order that his ablutions might be perfect; and, withal, he was a great hater of the sect of Ali, a feeling he strictly kept to himself as long as he was in Persia. His prevailing passion was love of gain, and he never went to sleep without having ascertained that his money was deposited in a place of safety. He was, however, devoted to his own ease; smoked constantly, ate much, and secretly drank wine, although he denounced eternal perdition to those who openly indulged in it.

The caravan was appointed to collect in the spring, and we made preparations for our departure. My master bought a strong, ambling mule for his own riding; whilst I was provided with a horse, which, besides myself, bore the kalián¹ (for he adopted the Persian style of smoking), the fire-pan and leather bottle, the charcoal, and also my own wardrobe. A black slave, who cooked for us, spread the carpets, loaded and unloaded the beasts, bestrode another mule, upon which were piled the bedding, carpets, and kitchen utensils. A third,

¹ This is the Persian pipe, made upon the principle of the Indian hookah.

carrying a pair of trunks, in which was my master's wardrobe, and every other necessary, completed our equipment.

The day before our departure, the prudent Osman had taken the precaution to sew into the cotton wadding of his heavy turban fifty ducats, a circumstance known only to him and me, and these were to serve in case of accidents; for the remainder of his cash, with which he intended to make his purchases, was sewed up in small white leather bags, and deposited in the very centre of the trunks.

The caravan, being ready to depart, consisted of about five hundred mules and horses, and two hundred camels, most of which were laden with merchandise for the north of Persia, and escorted by about one hundred and fifty men, composed of merchants, their servants, and the conductors of the caravan. Besides these, a small body of pilgrims bound to the tomb of Imâm Reza at Meshed joined the caravan, and gave a character of sanctity to the procession of which its other members were happy to take advantage, considering in what high estimation persons bound upon so laudable a purpose as a pilgrimage are always supposed to be held.

Every man on these occasions is armed, and my master, who always turned his head away whenever a gun was fired, and became pale at the sight of a drawn sword, now appeared with a long carbine slung obliquely across his back, and a crooked sword by his side, whilst a pair of huge pistols projected from his girdle; the rest of his surface was almost made up of the apparatus of cartouch-boxes, powder-flasks, ramrods, etc. I also was armed *cap-à-pie*, only in addition to what my master carried, I was honoured by wielding a huge spear. The black slave had a sword with only half a blade, and a gun without a lock.

We started at break of day from the northern suburb of Ispahan, led by the *chaoûshes*¹ of the pilgrimage, who announced our departure by loud cries and the beating of their

¹ Officers whose duties are to find quarters for the pilgrims, establish the prices of provisions, make arrangements for their supply, regulate the hours of march, settle disputes, and announce the time of prayer, etc.

copper drums. We soon got acquainted with our fellow-travellers, who were all armed ; but who, notwithstanding their martial equipment, appeared to be very peaceably disposed persons. I was delighted with the novelty of the scene, and could not help galloping and curvetting my horse, to the annoyance of my master, who, in a somewhat crabbed tone, bid me keep in mind that the beast would not last the journey if I wore it out by unseasonable feats of horsemanship. I soon became a favourite with all the company, many of whom I shaved after the day's march was over. As for my master, it is not too much to say that I was a great source of comfort to him, for after the fatigue of sitting his mule was at an end, I practised many of the arts which I had acquired at the bath to do away the stiffness of his limbs, by kneading his body all over, and rubbing him with my hands.

We proceeded without impediment to Tehran, where we sojourned ten days to rest our mules, and to increase our numbers. The dangerous part of the journey was to come, as a tribe of Turcomans, who were at war with the king of Persia, were known to infest the road, and had lately attacked and plundered a caravan, whilst at the same time they had carried those who composed it into captivity. Such were the horrors related of the Turcomans that many of our party, and my master in particular, were fearful of proceeding to Meshed ; but the account he received of the enormous price of lamb-skins at Constantinople was so alluring, that, in spite of everything, he resolved not to be frightened out of his prospect of gain.

A chaoûsh had long been collecting pilgrims at Tehran and its vicinity, in the expectation of the arrival of our caravan, and as soon as we made our appearance, he informed us, that he was ready to join us with a numerous band, a reinforcement which he assured us we ought to receive with gratitude, considering the dangers which we were about to encounter. He was a character well known on the road between Tehran and Meshed, and enjoyed a great reputation for courage, which he had acquired for having cut off a Turcoman's head whom he had once found dead on the road. His appearance was most

formidable, being in person tall and broad-shouldered, with a swarthy, sunburnt face, ornamented by a few stiff hairs by way of beard at the end of a bony chin. Clad in a breastplate of iron, a helmet with a chain cape flapping over his shoulders, a curved sword by his side, pistols in his girdle, a shield slung behind his back, and a long spear in his hand, he seemed to bid defiance to danger. He made such boast of his prowess, and talked of the Turcomans with such contempt, that my master determined to proceed under his immediate escort. The caravan was ready to depart a week after the festival of the New Year's day; and after having performed our devotions at the great mosque of the congregation on the Friday, we went to the village of Shahabdul Azim, whence the whole body was to proceed the next day on its journey.

We advanced by slow marches over a parched and dreary country, that afforded little to relieve the eye or cheer the heart. Whenever we approached a village, or met travellers on the road, invocations of Allah and of the Prophet were made by our conductors, in loud and shrill tones, accompanied by repeated blows with a leather thong on the drums suspended to their saddle-bow. Our conversation chiefly turned upon the Turcomans, and although we were all agreed that they were a desperate enemy, yet we managed to console ourselves by the hope that nothing could withstand our numbers and appearance, and by repeatedly exclaiming, 'In the name of God, whose dogs are they, that they should think of attacking us?' Every one vaunted his own courage. My master above the rest, with his teeth actually chattering from apprehension, boasted of what he would do in case we were attacked; and, to hear his language, one would suppose that he had done nothing all his life but fight and slaughter Turcomans. The chaoûsh, who overheard his boastings, and who was jealous of being considered the only man of courage of the party, said aloud, 'No one can speak of the Turcomans until they have seen them—and none but an "eater of lions" (at the same time pulling up his mustachios towards his ears) ever came unhurt out of their clutches. Saadi speaks truth when he sayeth, "A young man,

though he hath strength of arm, and the force of an elephant, will kick his heel ropes to pieces with fear in the day of battle.”’

But Osman Aga’s principal hope of security, and of faring better than others in case we were attacked, was in the circumstance of his being a follower of Omar;¹ and, by way of proclaiming it, he wound a piece of green muslin round his cap, and gave himself out as an Emir, or a descendant of the Prophet, to whom, as the reader may guess, he was no more allied than to the mule upon which he rode.

We had proceeded in this manner for several days, when the chaoûsh informed us in a solemn and important manner, that we were now approaching to the places where the Turcomans generally lie in wait for caravans, and directed that we should all march in a compact body, and invited us to make preparations for a desperate resistance in case we were attacked. The first impulse of my master was to tie his gun, sword, and pistols on one of his baggage-mules. He then complained of an affection in the bowels, and so abandoning all his former intentions of engaging in combat, wrapped himself up in the folds of his cloak, put on a face of great misery, took to counting his beads, ever and anon repeating the prayer of *Staferallah*, or ‘God forgive me,’ and, thus prepared, resigned himself to his destiny. His greatest dependence for protection he seemed to have placed upon the chaoûsh, who, among other reasons for asserting his indifference to danger, pointed to the numerous talismans and spells that he wore bound on his arms, and which, he boldly maintained, would avert the arrow of a Turcoman at any time.

This double-bladed sword of a man, and one or two of the boldest of the caravan, rode ahead, at some distance, as an advanced guard, and every now and then, by way of keeping up their courage, galloped their horses, brandishing their lances, and thrusting them forward into the air.

¹ The Turcomans, as well as the Turks, their descendants, are of the *Sûni* persuasion: with them green is a sacred colour; but it is not so among the *Shiahs*.

At length what we so much apprehended actually came to pass. We heard some shots fired, and then our ears were struck by wild and barbarous shoutings. The whole of us stopped in dismay, and men and animals, as if by common instinct, like a flock of small birds when they see a hawk at a distance, huddled ourselves together into one compact body. But when we in reality perceived a body of Turcomans coming down upon us, the scene instantly changed. Some ran away; others, and among them my master, losing all their energies, yielded to intense fear, and began to exclaim, 'O Allah!—O Imâms!—O Mohammed the prophet; we are gone! we are dying! we are dead!' The muleteers unloosed their loads from their beasts, and drove them away. A shower of arrows, which the enemy discharged as they came on, achieved their conquest, and we soon became their prey. The chaoûsh, who had outlived many a similar fray, fled in the very first encounter, and we neither saw nor heard any more of him. The invaders soon fell to work upon the baggage, which was now spread all over the plain.

My master had rolled himself up between two bales of goods to wait the event, but was discovered by a Turcoman of great size, and of a most ferocious aspect, who, taking him at first for part of the baggage, turned him over on his back, when (as we see a woodlouse do) he opened out at full length and expressed all his fears by the most abject entreaties. He tried to soften the Turcoman by invoking Omar, and cursing Ali; but nothing would do; the barbarian was inexorable: he only left him in possession of his turban, out of consideration to its colour, but in other respects he completely stripped him, leaving him nothing but his drawers and shirt, and clothing himself with my master's comfortable cloak and trousers before his face. My clothes being scarcely worth the taking, I was permitted to enjoy them unmolested, and I retained possession of my case of razors, to my no small satisfaction.

The Turcomans having completed their plunder, made a distribution of the prisoners. We were blindfolded, and placed each of us behind a horseman, and after having

travelled for a whole day in this manner, we rested at night in a lonely dell. The next day we were permitted to see, and found ourselves on roads known only to the Turcomans.

Passing through wild and unfrequented tracts of mountainous country, we at length discovered a large plain, which was so extensive that it seemed the limits of the world, and was covered with the black tents and the numerous flocks and herds of our enemies.

CHAPTER III

INTO WHAT HANDS HAJJÍ BABA FALLS, AND THE FORTUNE WHICH
HIS RAZORS PROVED TO HIM

THE distribution of their prisoners which had been made by the Turcomans, turned out so far fortunate, that Osman Aga and I fell into the hands of one master, the savage robber whom I have before mentioned. He was called Aslan Sultan,¹ or the Lion Chief, and proved to be the captain of a considerable encampment, which we reached almost immediately after descending from the mountains into the plain. His tents were situated on the borders of a deep ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a stream that took its rise in a chain of neighbouring hills; and green pastures, teeming with cattle, were spread around as far as the eye could reach. Our other fellow-sufferers were carried into a more distant part of the country, and distributed among the different tribes of Turcomans who inhabit this region.

At our appearance the whole encampment turned out to look at us, and whilst our conqueror was greeted with loud welcomes, we were barked at and nearly devoured by a pack of large sheep-dogs, who had soon selected us out as strangers. My master's green shawl had hitherto procured him some degree of respect; but the chief wife, or the Banou,² as she was called, was seized, at first sight, with a strong desire to possess it; so he was left with no other covering to his head

¹ The word *Sultan*, which in Europe is generally used to designate the sovereign of Turkey, among the Tartars, Turcomans, etc., means captain or chief, and is given frequently to subalterns, as well as to those of higher rank.

² *Banou* implies a female head or chief; thus in the Arabian Nights, *Paribanou*, or more properly *Peribanou*, means the chief of the fairies. The king of Persia's principal wife is styled *Banou Harem*, chief of the harem.

than his padded caoûk, or tiara, which contained his money. That too was longed for by another wife, who said that it would just do to stuff the pack-saddle which had galled her camel's back, and it was taken from his head and thrown, among other lumber, into a corner of the tent. He did all he could to keep possession of this last remnant of his fortune, but to no purpose; in lieu of it he received an old sheep-skin cap, which had belonged to some unfortunate man, who, like us, had been a prisoner, and who had lately died of grief and wretchedness.

My master, having been installed in the possession of the dead man's cap, was soon appointed to fill his situation, which was that of tending the camels, when they were sent to feed upon the mountains, and, as he was fat and unwieldy, there was no apprehension of his running away. As for me, I was not permitted to leave the tents, but was, for the present, employed in shaking the leather bags which contained the curds from which butter was made.

In order to celebrate the success of the expedition, an entertainment was given by the chief to the whole encampment. A large caldron, filled with rice, was boiled, and two sheep were roasted whole. The men, consisting of our chief's relations, who came from the surrounding tents, and most of whom had been at the attack of our caravan, were assembled in one tent, whilst the women were collected in another. After the rice and the sheep had been served up to the men, they were carried to the women, and when they had done, the shepherds' boys were served, and, after they had devoured their utmost, the bones and scrapings of dishes were given to us and the dogs. But, when I was waiting with great anxiety for our morsel, having scarcely tasted food since we were taken, I was secretly beckoned to by one of the women, who made me screen myself behind a tent, and setting down a dish of rice, with a bit of the sheep's tail in it, which was sent, she said, by the chief's wife, who pitied my misfortune, and bade me be of good courage, hurried away without waiting for my acknowledgments.

The day was passed by the men in smoking, and relating their adventures, and by the women in singing and beating the tambourine, whilst my poor master and I were left to ponder over our forlorn situation. The mark of favour which I had just received had set my imagination to work, and led me to consider my condition as not entirely desperate. But in vain I endeavoured to cheer up the spirits of my companion; he did not cease to bewail his hard fate. I brought to his mind that constant refuge of every true Mussulman in grief, '*Allah kerim!* —God is merciful!' His answer was, '*Allah kerim, Allah kerim,* is all very well for you who had nothing to lose; but in the meantime I am ruined for ever.' His greatest concern seemed to be the having failed to secure the profits which he had expected to make on his lamb-skins, and he passed all his time in calculating, to the utmost farthing, what had been his losses on this occasion. However, we were soon to be parted. He was sent off the next day to the mountains, in charge of a string of fifty camels, with terrible threats from the chief that his nose and ears should pay for the loss of any one of them, and that if one died, its price should be added to the ransom-money which he hereafter expected to receive for him. As the last testimony of my affection for him, I made him sit down on a camel's pack-saddle, and, with some water from a neighbouring spring, and a piece of soap, which, together with my razors, I had saved from the wreck of our fortunes, shaved him in the face of the whole camp. I very soon found that this exhibition of my abilities and profession might be productive of the greatest advantage to my future prospects. Every fellow who had a head to scratch immediately found out that he wanted shaving, and my reputation soon reached the ears of the chief, who called me to him, and ordered me to operate upon him without loss of time. I soon went to work upon a large head that exhibited the marks of many a sword-cut, and which presented as rough a surface as that of the sheep-dogs aforementioned. He who had been accustomed to have his hair clipped, perhaps, with the same instrument that sheared his sheep, and who knew of no greater luxury than that of being

mutilated by some country barber, felt himself in paradise under my hand. He freely expressed his satisfaction and his approbation of my services, said, on feeling his head, that I had shaved him two days' march under the skin, swore that he never would accept of any ransom for me, be it what it might, and that I should, henceforth, be entitled to the appointment of his own body barber. I leave the gentle reader to guess what were my feelings upon this occasion. Whilst I stooped down and kissed the knee of this my new master, with every appearance of gratitude and respect, I determined to make use of the liberty which the confidence reposed in me might afford, by running away on the very first favourable opportunity. From being so often near the person of the chief, I soon began to acquire great ascendancy over him ; and although I was still watched with care, yet I could already devise plans, which appeared to me to be practicable, for escaping from this hateful servitude into which I was thrown, and I felt in a less degree than another would have done the drudgery and wretchedness of my situation.

CHAPTER IV

OF HIS INGENUITY IN RESCUING HIS MASTER'S MONEY FROM THE
TURCOMAN, AND OF HIS DETERMINATION TO KEEP IT

ONE of the first objects which I had in view for the furtherance of my plan of escape was to obtain possession of the money which was sewed in the padding of my former master's turban. But it had been thrown into a corner of the women's tent, to which I had no access, and it required much ingenuity to get at it without creating suspicion. I had established my reputation as a barber throughout ours and the neighbouring encampments, and had become a favourite of the men; but although I had reason to believe that the Banou of my master would fain become more intimately acquainted with me than she hitherto had been, yet as neither she nor any other of the women could employ me in my profession as a shaver, our intercourse hitherto had been confined to tender glances, occasional acts of kindness on her part, and of corresponding marks of thankfulness and acknowledgment on mine. But as they knew enough of civilised life to be aware that in Persia barbers were also surgeons—that besides shaving and rubbing in the bath, they could bleed, draw teeth, and set a broken limb—the Banou soon discovered that she wanted to be bled, and sent a deputation to ask me if I could perform that service for her. Looking upon this as a favourable opportunity to learn some tidings of the object of my solicitude, or perhaps to gain possession of it, I immediately answered that provided I was furnished with a penknife, I hoped that I could bleed as dexterously as the best of my profession. The instrument was produced, and one of the elders of the tribe, who pretended to a smattering of astrology, announced that a conjunction of the

planets favourable to such an operation would take place on the following morning. At that auspicious moment, I was introduced into the women's tent, where I found the Banou seated on a carpet on the ground, waiting for me with great impatience. She was not a person to excite sensations of a tender nature in a novice like me; for, in the first place, she was of an unwieldy size¹ (so different from the slim forms that we are taught to prize in Persia) that I looked upon her with disgust; and, in the next, I lived in such terror of Aslan Sultan, that had I aspired to her favour, it must have been in the constant dread of the loss of my ears. However, I was much noticed by her, and received great attentions from her companions, who, looking upon me as a being of a superior order, all wanted to have their pulses felt. Whilst making my preparations for bleeding the Banou, I cast my eyes about the tent, in the hopes of seeing the prize, which I was anxious to possess. It struck me that I might make the very operation in which I was engaged subservient to my views, and demanding to feel the patient's pulse once more, which I did with a look of intense meditation, I observed that this was a complicated disorder—that the blood must not be allowed to flow upon the ground, but be collected in a vessel, that I might examine it at leisure. This strange proposal of mine raised an immediate outcry amongst the women; but with the Banou a deviation from the usual practice only served to confirm her opinion of my superior skill. Here, however, a new difficulty arose. The scanty stock of a Turcoman could ill afford to sacrifice any utensil by applying it to a service which would defile it for ever. They were recapitulated one by one, and all found too precious to be thrown away. I was hesitating whether I might venture to go straight to my point, when the Banou bethought herself of an old leather drinking-cup, which she desired one of the women to search for in a corner of the tent. 'This will never do: you can see the light through it,' said I, holding it up

¹ The Turks differ materially from the Persians in their tastes for women, the one admiring corpulency, whilst the latter show greater refinement, and esteem those forms which are mostly prized in Europe.

towards the tent-door, and pointing to the seams with the penknife, which I held in my hand, and with which I cut, at the same time, half a dozen of the stitches. 'Where is the cap of that old Emir?' cried out the Banou. 'It is mine,' said the second wife; 'I want it to stuff my saddle with.' 'Yours!' returned the other in a fury. 'There is but one God! Am not I the Banou of this harem? I will have it.' 'You shall not,' retorted the other. Upon this an uproar ensued which became so loud and threatening, that I feared it would come to the ears of Aslan Sultan, who very probably would have settled the dispute by taking at once the bone of contention from the contending parties. But luckily the astrologer interfered, and when he had assured the second wife that the blood of the Banou would be upon her head, if anything unfortunate happened on this occasion, she consented to give up her pretensions. I accordingly prepared to bleed my patient; but when she saw the penknife, the cap underneath to receive her blood, and the anxious faces of those about her, she became frightened, and refused to permit me to proceed. Fearing after all that I should lose my prize, I put on a very sagacious look, felt her pulse, and said that her refusal was unavailing, for that it was her fate to be bled, and that she and every one knew nothing could avert an event which had been decreed since the beginning of the world. To this there was no reply; and all agreeing that she would commit a great sin were she to oppose herself to the decrees of Providence, she put out her bare arm, and received the stab from my penknife with apparent fortitude. The blood was caught, and, when the operation was over, I ordered that it should be conveyed to a little distance from the camp, and that none but myself should be permitted to approach it, as much of the good or evil that might accrue to the patient from bleeding depended upon what happened to the blood after it had flowed from the body. I waited until night, when everybody was asleep, and then with great anxiety ripped up the lining, where to my joy I found the fifty ducats, which I immediately concealed in an adjacent spot, and then dug a hole for the

cap, which I also concealed. In the morning I informed the Banou, that having seen some wolves prowling about the tents, I feared that something unlucky might happen to her blood, and that I had buried it, caoûk and all. This appeared to satisfy her; and by way of recompense for the service I had rendered, she sent me a dish made with her own hands, consisting of a lamb roasted whole, stuffed with rice and raisins, accompanied by a bowl of sour milk with salt in it.

I must confess that when I became possessed of the fifty ducats, a recollection of my poor former master, who was leading a melancholy life in the mountains with the camels, whilst I was living in comparative luxury, came across my mind, and I half resolved to restore them to him; but by little and little I began to argue differently with myself. 'Had it not been for my ingenuity,' said I, 'the money was lost for ever; who therefore has a better claim to it than myself? If he was to get possession of it again, it could be of no use to him in his new profession, and it is a hundred to one but what it would be taken from him, therefore I had best keep it for the present: besides, it was his fate to lose, and mine to recover it.' This settled every difficulty, and I looked upon myself as the legitimate possessor of fifty ducats, which I conceived no law could take from me. Meanwhile I made an attempt to convey to him half of the roasted lamb which I had just received, through the means of a shepherd's boy who was going into the mountains, and who promised not to eat any of it by the wayside. Although I doubted his word, yet, after my deliberation about the ducats, my conscience wanted some quietus: 'I cannot do less,' said I, 'than make my fellow-sufferer in adversity a partaker of my prosperity.' But alas! the boy had scarcely crossed the deep ravine that bordered the encampment ere I could perceive him carrying the meat to his mouth, and I made no doubt that every bone was picked clean before he was out of my sight. It would have been a useless undertaking to have pursued him, considering the distance that already separated us, so I contented myself by discharging a stone and a malediction at his head, neither of which reached their destination.

CHAPTER V

HAJJI BABA INVADES HIS NATIVE CITY, AND BECOMES A
ROBBER IN HIS OWN DEFENCE

I HAD now been above a year in the hands of the Turcomans, during which I had acquired the entire confidence of my master. He consulted me upon all his own affairs, as well as those of his community, and as he considered that I might now be depended upon, he at length determined to permit me to accompany him in a predatory excursion into Persia,—a permission, which, in hope of a good opportunity to escape, I had frequently entreated of him to grant. Hitherto I had never been allowed to stray beyond the encampment and its surrounding pastures, and as I was totally ignorant of the roads through the great salt desert which separated us from Persia, I knew that it would be in vain for me to attempt flight, as many before me had done, and who invariably had either perished or returned to their masters, who treated them with more rigour than before. I therefore rejoiced that I now had an opportunity of observing the country we were about to cross, and determined with myself that if I could not get away during this expedition, nothing should hinder my attempting it on our return. The Turcomans generally make their principal excursions in the spring, when they find pasturage for their horses in the high lands, and new corn in the plains, and because they then are almost certain of meeting caravans on their maroh, which they plunder. This season being now near at hand, Aslan called together the chiefs of his tribe, the heads of tens and the heads of hundreds, and all those who were skilled in plunder, and proposed a plan to them of an incursion into the very heart of Persia. Their

object was to reach Ispahan itself, to enter the city in the night, when all was quiet, and to sack the caravanserai, to which the richest merchants were known to resort. Our guide through the great salt desert was to be my master in person, whose experience and local knowledge was greater than that of any of his contemporaries; and he proposed to the council that as no one amongst them knew the streets and bazaars of Ispahan, I should lead the way, when once we had entered the city. This was opposed by several, who said that it was imprudent to trust a stranger, a native of the very place they intended to attack, who would be likely to run off the moment he could do so with safety. At length, after much discussion, it was agreed that I should be their guide in Ispahan; that two men should ride close on each side of me, and in case I showed the least symptom of treachery in my movements, should kill me on the spot. This being settled, the Turcomans put their horses in training, and one was appointed for my use, which had the reputation of having borne away the flag twice at their races. I was equipped as a Turcoman, with a large sheep-skin cap on my head, a sheep-skin coat, a sword, a bow and arrows, and a heavy wooden spear, the head of which was taken off or put on as the occasion might require. I had a bag of corn tied behind on my horse, besides ropes to tether him with when we made a halt,—and for my own food, I carried several flaps of bread,¹ and half a dozen of hard eggs, trusting to the chance of accidents, and to my own endurance of hunger, for further sustenance. I had already made a very tolerable apprenticeship to a hard life since I had first been taken, by sleeping on the ground, with the first thing that I could seize for a pillow, and thus I looked upon the want of a bed as no privation. My companions were equally hardy, and in point of bodily fatigue, perhaps, we were a match for any nation in the world.

I took previous care to unbury the fifty ducats, which I tied very carefully in my girdle, and I promised my former

¹ The bread here alluded to is baked on small and convex iron plates, and when prepared is about the thickness of brown paper.

master, who from fretting had worn himself down to a skeleton, that if ever I had an opportunity, I would do all in my power to make his friends ransom him. 'Ah,' said he, 'no one will ever ransom me. As for my son, he will be happy to get my property; and as for my wife, she will be happy to get another husband:—so no hope is left. There is only one favour I beg of you, which is, to inquire what is the price of lamb-skins at Constantinople.'

And here I had another struggle with my conscience on the subject of the ducats. Should I restore them? Would it not be more advantageous, even to my master, that I should keep them? My ability to take advantage of this opportunity to escape might depend upon my having a little money in my purse—and what chance had he of being relieved but through my interference? All things considered, I let them remain in my girdle.

The astrologer having fixed upon a lucky hour for our departure, we mounted at night-fall. Our party consisted of Aslan Sultan, who was appointed chief of the expedition, and of twenty men, myself included. Our companions were composed of the principal men of the different encampments in our neighbourhood, and were all, more or less, accomplished cavaliers. They were mounted upon excellent horses, the speed and bottom of which are so justly celebrated throughout Asia; and as we rode along in the moonlight, completely armed, I was persuaded that we looked as desperate a gang of ruffians as ever took the field. For my part, I felt that nature had never intended me for a warrior, and although I thought that I could keep up appearances as well as most men in my predicament, and indeed I believe did act my part so perfectly, as to make both my master and his companions believe that they had got a very Rustam¹ in me, yet I dreaded the time when I should be put to the trial.

I was surprised to observe the dexterity with which our

¹ Rustam is the fabulous hero of Persian history, so much celebrated in the Shahnameh as a paragon of strength and courage. His duel with Asfendiar, which lasted two whole days, is the theme of Persian romance.

chief led us through the thick forests that clothe the mountains bordering on the plains of Kipchák. The dangers of the precipices and the steep ascents were something quite appalling to a young traveller like me; but my companions rode over everything with the greatest unconcern, confident in the sure-footedness of their horses. Having once ascended the mountains, we entered upon the arid plains of Persia, and there my master's knowledge of the country was again conspicuous. He knew every summit the moment it appeared, with the same certainty as an experienced Frank sailor recognises a distant headland at sea. But he showed his sagacity most in drawing his inferences from the tracks and footsteps of animals. He could tell what sort of travellers they belonged to, whence coming, whither going, whether enemy or foe, whether laden or unladen, and what their probable numbers, with the greatest precision.

We travelled with much precaution as long as we were in the inhabited parts of the country, lying by during the day, and making all expedition at night. Our stock of provender and provisions was renewed at the last encampment of the wandering tribes which we visited before we reached the great salt desert, and when we entered it, we urged our horses on with as much haste as we knew their strength was likely to support. At length, after travelling about 120 parasangs,¹ we found ourselves in the environs of Ispahan. The moment for reaping the fruit of our fatigue, and for trying my courage, was now at hand, and my heart quite misgave me when I heard of the plan of attack which my companions proposed.

Their scheme was to enter the city through one of the unguarded avenues, which were well known to me, and at midnight to make straight for the royal caravanserai, where we were sure to find a great many merchants, who at this season of the year collect there with ready money to make their purchases. We were at once to carry off all the cash we could find, then to gag and seize each a merchant if we

¹ A parasang is equivalent to about three and a half geographical miles.

were able, and before the city could be alarmed, we might be on the road to our encampment again. I found the plan so hazardous, and so little likely to succeed, that I gave it as my opinion that we ought not to attempt it; but my master, putting on his most determined look, said to me, 'Hajji! open your eyes—this is no child's play!—I swear by the beard of the Prophet, that if you do not behave well, I'll burn your father. We have succeeded before, and why should we not be as successful now?' He then ordered me to ride near him, and placed another ruffian at my side, and both vowed, if I flinched, that they would immediately run me through the body. We then took the lead, and, from my knowledge of Ispahan, I easily picked my way through the ruins which surround it, and then entered into the inhabited streets, which were at that time of night entirely forsaken. When near the scene of action, we stopped under the arches of a ruined house, which are so frequently to be met with even in the most inhabited parts of the city, and dismounting from our horses, picqueted them to the ground with pegs and heel ropes,¹ and left them under the care of two of our men. By way of precaution, we appointed a rendezvous in a lonely dell about five parasangs from Ispahan, to which it was determined we should retreat as circumstances might require. Once on foot, we proceeded without noise in a body, avoiding as much as we could the bazaars, where I knew that the officers of the police kept watch, and by lanes reached the gate of the caravanserai. Here was a place, every square inch of which I knew by heart, namely, my father's shaving-shop. Being aware that the gate of the caravanserai would be locked, I made the party halt, and, taking up a stone, knocked, and calling out to the door-keeper by name: 'Ali Mohammed,' said I, 'open, open: the caravan is arrived.'

¹ A fully-equipped horseman in the East generally carries with him an iron peg, to which is affixed a rope terminated by a noose, with which he picquets his horse wherever he may alight. The rope is buttoned to the fore leg, whilst the peg is driven into the ground with a stone.

Between asleep and awake, without showing the least symptom of opening, 'What caravan?' said he.

'The caravan from Bagdad.'

'From Bagdad? why, that arrived yesterday. Do you laugh at my beard?'

Seeing myself entrapped, I was obliged to have recourse to my own name, and said, 'Why, a caravan, to be sure, with Hajji Baba, Kerbelai Hassan the barber's son, who went away with Osman Aga, the Bagdad merchant, I bring the news, and expect the present.'

'What, Hajji?' said the porter, 'he who used to shave my head so well? His place has long been empty. You are welcome.'

Upon which he began to unbolt the heavy gates of the entrance porch, which, as they creaked on their hinges, discovered a little old man in his drawers, with an iron lamp in his hand, which shed enough light to show us that the place was full of merchants and their effects.

One of our party immediately seized upon him, and then we all rushed in and fell to work. Expert in these sort of attacks, my companions knew exactly where to go for plunder, and they soon took possession of all the gold and silver that was to be found; but their first object was to secure some two or three of the richest merchants, whose ransom might be a further source of wealth to them. Ere the alarm had been spread, they had seized upon three, who, from their sleeping upon fine beds, covered with shawl quilts, and reposing upon embroidered cushions, they expected would prove a good prize. These they bound hand and foot after their fashion, and forcing them away, placed them upon the best horses, behind their riders, who immediately retreated from the scene of action to the rendezvous.

From my knowledge of the caravanserai itself, and of the rooms with which the richest merchants generally occupied, I knew where money was to be found, and I entered one room as softly as I could (the very room which my first master had occupied), and seizing upon the small box in which the

merchants generally keep theirs, I made off with it. To my joy, I found it contained a heavy bag, which I thrust into my bosom, and carried it about with me as well as I could; although, on account of the darkness, I could not ascertain of what metal it was.

By the time we had nearly finished our operations the city had been alarmed. Almost all the people within the caravanserai, such as servants, grooms, mule-drivers, at the first alarm had retreated to the roof; the neighbouring inhabitants then came in flocks, not knowing exactly what to do: then came the police magistrate and his officers, who also got on the roof of the caravanserai, but who only increased the uproar by their cries, exclaiming, 'Strike, seize, kill!' without in fact doing anything effectual to repulse the enemy. Some few shots were fired at random; but, owing to the darkness and the general confusion, we managed to steal away without any serious accident: but I must own that during the fray I was frequently tempted to leave the desperate gang to which I belonged, and to hide myself in some corner until they were gone; but I argued thus with myself: if I should succeed to get away, still my dress would discover me, and before I could explain who I really was, I should certainly fall a sacrifice to the fury of the populace, the effects of which more than once I had had occasion to witness. My father's shop was before me; the happy days I had passed in that very caravanserai were in my recollection, and I was in the act of deliberating within myself what I should do, when I felt myself roughly seized by the arm, and the first thing which I recognised on turning round was the grim face of Aslan Sultan, who threatened to kill me on the spot, if I did not render myself worthy of the confidence he had placed in me. In order to show him my prowess, I fastened upon a Persian who had just rushed by us, and, throwing him down, I exclaimed that, if he did not quietly submit to be taken prisoner and to follow me, I would put him to death. He began to make the usual lamentations, 'For the sake of Imâm Hossein, by the soul of your father, by the beard of Omar, I conjure you to leave me!' and immediately I recognised a voice that could belong

to no one but my own father. By a gleam from a lantern, I discovered his well-known face. It was evident that, hearing the commotion, he had left his bed to secure the property in his shop, which altogether did not consist of more than half a dozen of towels, a case of razors, soap, and a carpet. The moment I recognised him, I let go his beard, of which I had got a fast hold, and, owing to that habit of respect which all Persians show to their parents, would have kissed his hand and stood before him; but my life was in danger if I appeared to flinch, so I continued to struggle with him, and in order to show myself in earnest, pretending to beat him, I administered blows to a mule's pack-saddle that was close to where he lay. I heard my father muttering to himself, 'Ah, if Hajji was here, he would not permit me to be served in this way!' which had such a strong effect upon me, that I immediately let go, and exclaimed in Turkish to the surrounding Turcomans: 'He won't do for us; it's only a barber.' So without more ceremony I quitted the scene of action, mounted my horse, and retreated in full gallop through the city.

CHAPTER VI

CONCERNING THE THREE PRISONERS TAKEN BY THE TURCOMANS,
AND OF THE BOOTY MADE IN THE CARAVANSERAI

WHEN we had reached our place of rendezvous, we dismounted from our horses, and made a halt to rest them, and to recruit ourselves after the fatigues of the night. One of the party had not forgotten to steal a lamb as we rode along, which was soon put into a fit state to be roasted. It was cut up into small pieces, which were stuck on a ramrod, and placed over a slow fire made of what underwood we could find, mixed up with the dung of the animals, and, thus heated, was devoured most ravenously by us all.

Our next care was to ascertain the value of our prisoners. One was a tall, thin man, about fifty years of age, with a sharp eye, a hollow, aguish cheek, a scanty beard, wearing a pair of silken drawers, and a shawl under-coat. The other was a short, round man, of a middle age, with a florid face, dressed in a dark vest buttoning over his breast, and looked like an officer of the law. The third was stout and hairy, of rough aspect, of a strong, vigorous form, and who was bound with more care than the others on account of the superior resistance which he had made.

After we had finished our meal, and distributed the remains of it to the prisoners, we called them before us, and questioned them as to their professions and situations in life. The tall, thin man, upon whose rich appearance the Turcomans founded their chief hope, was first examined, and as I was the only one of our party who could talk Persian, I stood interpreter. 'Who and what are you?' said Aslan Sultan. 'I,' said the prisoner, in a very subdued voice, 'I beg to state, for the good of your service, that I am nothing—I am a poor man.'

'What's your business?'

'I am a poet, at your service: what can I do more?'

'A poet!' cried one of the roughest of the Turcomans; 'what is that good for?'

'Nothing,' answered Aslan Sultan, in a rage; 'he won't fetch ten tomauns;¹ poets are always poor, and live upon what they can cozen from others. Who will ransom a poet? But if you are so poor,' said Aslan Sultan, 'how do you come by those rich clothes?'

'They are part of a dress of honour,' returned the poet, 'which was lately conferred upon me by the Prince of Shiraz, for having written some verses in his praise.'

Upon which the clothes were taken from him, a sheep-skin cloak given to him in return, and he was dismissed for the present. Then came the short man. 'Who are you?' said the chief: 'what is your profession?'

'I am a poor *cadi*,' answered the other.

'How came you to sleep in a fine bed, if you are poor?' said the interrogator. 'You father of a dog, if you lie, we'll take your head off! Confess that you are rich! All *cadies* are rich: they live by selling themselves to the highest bidder.'

'I am the *cadi* of Galadoun, at your service,' said the prisoner. 'I was ordered to Ispahan by the governor to settle for the rent of a village which I occupy.'

'Where is the money for your rent?' said Aslan.

'I came to say,' answered the *cadi*, 'that I had no money to give, for that the locusts had destroyed all my last year's crops, and that there had been a want of water.'

'Then, after all, what is this fellow worth?' said one of the gang.

'He is worth a good price,' replied the chief, 'if he happens to be a good *cadi*, for then the peasants may wish him back again; but if not, a *dinar*² is too much for him. We must keep him: perhaps he is of more value than a merchant would be. But let us see how much this other fellow is likely to fetch.'

¹ A tomaun is the principal gold coin of Persia, worth about 14s.

² The *dinar* is the smallest denomination of money in Persia.

They then brought the rough man before them, and Aslan Sultan questioned him in the usual manner—'What are you?'

'I am a ferash' (a carpet-spreader), said he, in a very sulky manner.

'A ferash!' cried out the whole gang—'a ferash! The fellow lies! How came you to sleep in a fine bed?' said one.

'It was not mine,' he answered, 'it was my master's.'

'He lies! he lies!' they all cried out: 'he is a merchant—you are a merchant. Own it, or we'll put you to death.'

In vain he asserted that he was only a carpet-spreader—no-body believed him; and he received so many blows from different quarters, that at last he was obliged to roar out that he was a merchant.

But I, who judged from the appearance of the man that he could not be a merchant, but that he was what he owned himself to be, assured my companions that they had got but a sorry prize in him, and advised them to release him; but immediately I was assailed in my turn with a thousand maledictions, and was told, that if I chose to take part with my countrymen, I should share their fate, and become a slave again—so I was obliged to keep my peace, and permit the ruffians to have their own way.

Their speculation in man-stealing having proved so unfortunate, they were in no very good humour with their excursion, and there was a great difference of opinion amongst them, what should be done with such worthless prisoners. Some were for keeping the *cadi*, and killing the poet and the ferash, and others for preserving the *cadi* for ransom, and making the ferash a slave; but all seemed to be for killing the poet.

I could not help feeling much compassion for this man, who, in fact, appeared to be from his manners and general deportment a man of consequence, although he had pleaded poverty; and seeing it likely to go very hard with him, I said, 'What folly are you about to commit! Kill the poet! why, it will be worse than killing the goose with the golden egg. Don't you know that poets are sometimes very rich, and can, if they choose, become rich at all times, for they carry their wealth in their head?'

Did you never hear of the king who gave a famous poet a misca¹ of gold for every stanza which he composed? Is not the same thing said of the present Shah? and—who knows?—perhaps your prisoner may be the King's poet himself.'

'Is that the case?' said one of the gang; 'then let him make stanzas for us immediately, and if they don't fetch a misca each, he shall die.'

'Make on! make on!' exclaimed the whole of them to the poet, elated by so bright a prospect of gain: 'if you don't we'll cut your tongue out.'

At length it was decided that all three should be preserved, and that as soon as they had made a division of the booty, we should return to the plains of Kipchâk.

Aslan then called us together, and every man was obliged to produce what he had stolen. Some brought bags of silver and others gold. Nor did they confine themselves to money only; gold heads of pipes, a silver ewer, a sable pelisse, shawls, and a variety of other things, were brought before us. When it came to my turn, I produced the heaviest bag of tomauns that had yet been given in, which secured to me the applause of the whole company.

'Well done! well done, Hajjî!' said they all to me: 'he has become a good Turcoman: we could not have done better ourselves.'

My master in particular was very loud in his praises, and said, 'Hajjî, my son, by my own soul, by the head of my father, I swear that you have done bravely, and I will give you one of my slaves for a wife, and you shall live with us—and you shall have a tent of your own, with twenty sheep, and we'll have a wedding, when I will give an entertainment to all the encampment.'

These words sank deep in my mind, and only strengthened my resolution to escape on the very first opportunity; but in the meanwhile I was very intent upon the division of the spoil which was about to be made, as I hoped to be included for a considerable portion of it. To my great mortification they gave me not a single dīnar. In vain I exclaimed, in vain I en-

¹ Twenty-four grains make one misca.

treated ; all I could hear was, ' If you say a word more, we will cut your head off.' So I was obliged to console myself with my original fifty ducats, whilst my companions were squabbling about their shares. At length it became a scene of general contention, and would have finished by bloodshed, if a thought had not struck one of the combatants, who exclaimed, ' We have got a *cadi* here ; why should we dispute ? He shall decide between us.'

So immediately the poor *cadi* was set in the midst of them, and was made to legislate upon goods, part of which belonged in fact to himself, without even getting the percentage due to him as judge.

CHAPTER VII

HAJJÎ BABA EVINCES A FEELING DISPOSITION—HISTORY
OF THE POET ASKER

WE made our retreat by the same road we came, but not with the same expedition, on account of our prisoners. They sometimes walked, and sometimes rode.

The general appearance of the poet had, from the first moment, interested me in his misfortunes; and being a smatterer in learning myself, my vanity, perhaps, was flattered with the idea of becoming the protector of a man of letters in distress. Without appearing to show any particular partiality to him, I succeeded in being appointed to keep watch over him, under the plea that I would compel him to make verses; and conversing in our language, we were able to communicate with each other with great freedom without the fear of being understood. I explained my situation, and informed him of my intentions to escape, and assured him that I would do everything in my power to be useful to him. He seemed delighted to meet with kind words where he expected nothing but ill-treatment; and when I had thus acquired his confidence, he did not scruple to talk to me freely about himself and his concerns. I discovered, what I had before suspected, that he was a man of consequence, for he was no less a personage than the court poet, enjoying the title of *Melek al Shoherah*, or the Prince of Poets. He was on his road from Shiraz (whither he had been sent by the Shah on business) to Tehran, and had that very day reached Ispahan, when he had fallen into our hands. In order to beguile the tediousness of the road through the Salt Desert, after I had related my adventures, I requested him to give me an account of his, which he did in the following words:—

'I was born in the city of Kerman, and my name is Asker. My father was for a long time governor of that city, during the reign of the eunuch Aga Mohammed Shah : and although the intrigues that were set on foot against him to deprive him of his government were very mischievous, still such was his respectability that his enemies never entirely prevailed against him. His eyes were frequently in danger, but his adroitness preserved them ; and he had at last the good fortune to die peacefully in his bed in the present Shah's reign. I was permitted to possess the property which he left, which amounted to about 10,000 tomauns. In my youth I was remarkable for the attention which I paid to my studies, and before I had arrived at the age of sixteen I was celebrated for writing a fine hand. I knew Hafiz entirely by heart, and had myself acquired such a facility in making verses, that I might almost be said to speak in numbers. There was no subject that I did not attempt. I wrote on the loves of Leilah¹ and Majnoun ; I never heard the note of a nightingale, but I made it pour out its loves to the rose ; and wherever I went I never failed to produce my poetry and chant it out in the assembly. At this time the king was waging war with Sadik Khan, a pretender to the throne, and a battle was fought, in which his majesty commanded in person, and which terminated in the defeat of the rebel. I immediately sang the king's praises. In describing the contest, I made Rustam, our fabulous hero, appear, standing in a cloud just over the field of battle ; who, seeing the king lay about him desperately, exclaims to himself, "Lucky wight am I to be here instead of below, for certainly I should never escape from *his* blows," I also exerted my wit, and was much extolled when I said, that Sadik Khan and his troops ought not to repine after all ; for although they were vanquished, yet still the king, in his magnanimity, had exalted their heads to the skies. In this, I alluded to a pillar of skulls which his majesty had caused to be erected of the heads of the vanquished. These sayings of mine were

¹ The loves of these personages have been created by various Oriental writers. Majnoun is looked upon as the model of a lover, and Leilah as the most beautiful and perfect of her sex.

reported to the Shah, and he was pleased to confer upon me the highest honour which a poet can receive: namely, causing my mouth to be filled with gold coin in the presence of the whole court, at the great audience. This led to my advancement; and I was appointed to attend at court, and to write verses on all occasions. In order to show my zeal, I represented to the king, that as in former times our great Ferdûsi had written his *Shah Nameh*, or the History of the Kings, it behoved him, who was greater than any monarch Persia ever possessed, to have a poet who should celebrate his reign; and I entreated permission to write a *Shahin Shah Nameh*, or the History of the King of Kings; to which his majesty was most graciously pleased to give his consent. One of my enemies at court was the lord high treasurer, who, without any good reason, wanted to impose upon me a fine of 12,000 tomauns, which the king, on the plea that I was the first poet of the age, would not allow. It happened one day, that in a large assembly, the subject of discussion was the liberality of Mahmoud Shah Ghaznevi to Ferdûsi, who gave him a miscal of gold for every couplet in the *Shah Nameh*. Anxious that the king should hear what I was about to say, I exclaimed: "The liberality of his present majesty is equal to that of Mahmoud Shah—equal, did I say?—nay, greater; because in the one case, it was exercised towards the most celebrated poet of Persia; and in my case, it is exercised towards the humble individual now before you."

'All the company were anxious to hear how and when such great favours had been conferred upon me. "In the first place," said I, "when my father died, he left a property of 10,000 tomauns; the king permitted me to inherit it; he might have taken it away—there are 10,000 tomauns. Then the lord high treasurer wanted to fine me 12,000 tomauns; the king did not allow it—there are 12,000 more. Then the rest is made up of what I have subsisted upon ever since I have been in the Shah's service, and so my sum is made out." And then I took to my exclamations of "May the king live for ever!—may his shadow never be less!—may he conquer all his enemies!"—all of which I flattered myself was duly re-

ported to his majesty : and some days after I was invested with a dress of honour, consisting of a brocade coat, a shawl for the waist, and one for the head, and a brocade cloak trimmed with fur. I was also honoured with the title of Prince of Poets, by virtue of a royal firman, which, according to the usual custom, I wore in my cap for three successive days, receiving the congratulations of my friends, and feeling of greater consequence than I had ever done before. I wrote a poem, which answered the double purpose of gratifying my revenge for the ill-treatment I had received from the lord high treasurer, and of conciliating his good graces ; for it had a double meaning all through : what he in his ignorance mistook for praise, was in fact satire ; and as he thought that the high-sounding words in which it abounded (which, being mostly Arabic, he did not understand) must contain an eulogium, he did not in the least suspect that they were in fact expressions containing the grossest disrespect. In truth, I had so cloaked my meaning, that, without my explanation, it would have been difficult for any one to have discovered it. But it was not alone in poetry that I excelled. I had a great turn for mechanics, and several of my inventions were much admired at court. I contrived a wheel for perpetual motion, which only wants one little addition to make it go round for ever. I made different sorts of coloured paper ; I invented a new sort of ink-stand ; and was on the high road to making cloth, when I was stopped by his majesty, who said to me, "Asker, keep to your poetry : whenever I want cloth, my merchants bring it from Europe." And I obeyed his instructions ; for on the approaching festival of the New Year's Day, when it is customary for each of his servants to make him a present, I wrote something so happy about a toothpick, which I presented in a handsome case, that the principal noblemen of the court, at the great public audience of that sacred day, were ordered to kiss me on the mouth for my pains. I compared his majesty's teeth to pearls, and the toothpick to the pearl-diver ; his gums to a coral bank, near which pearls are frequently found ; and the long beard and mustachios that encircled the mouth to the un-

dulations of the ocean. I was complimented by everybody present upon the fertility of my imagination: I was assured that Ferdûsi was a downright ass when compared to me. By such means, I enjoyed great favour with the Shah; and his majesty being anxious to give me an opportunity of acquiring wealth as well as honours, appointed me to be the bearer of the usual annual dress of honour which he sends to his son, the prince of the province of Fars. I was received at Shiraz with the greatest distinctions, and presents were made to me to a considerable amount; which, in addition to what I had levied from the villages on the road, made a handsome sum. The event of last night has deprived me of all; all has been stolen from me, and here you see me the most miserable and most wretched of beings. If you do not manage to help me to escape, I fear that I shall die a prisoner. Perhaps the king may be anxious to release me, but certainly he will never pay one farthing for my ransom. The lord high treasurer is not my friend; and since I told the grand vizier, that with all his wisdom he did not know how to wind up a watch, much less how it was made, I fear that he also will not care for my loss. The money, with which I might have purchased my ransom, the barbarians have taken; and where to procure a similar sum I know not. It is my fate to have fallen into this disaster, therefore I must not repine; but let me entreat you, as you are a fellow-Mussulman—as you hate Omar, and love Ali—let me entreat you to help me in my distress.'

CHAPTER VIII

HAJJI BABA ESCAPES FROM THE TURCOMANS. THE MEANING OF
'FALLING FROM THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE' ILLUSTRATED

As soon as the poet had finished his narrative, I assured him that I would do everything in my power to serve him; but I recommended patience to him for the present, as I had not yet devised the means of procuring my own liberty, and foresaw great difficulties in saving him at the same time. It would be impossible to evade the watchfulness of our masters, as long as we were in the open desert: their horses were as good as mine, and they were much better acquainted with the country than I was. To run away from them under these circumstances would be madness; therefore it was only left us to watch any opportunity that might be given us of escape.

We had reached the limits of the Salt Desert, and were about crossing the high road that leads from Tehran to Meshed, about twenty parasangs to the east of Damgan, when Aslan Sultan made a halt, and proposed that we should remain concealed for a day in the broken ground that borders the road, in the hopes that fortune might throw us in the way of a passing caravan, which it was his intention that we should pillage. At the very dawn of the following day, a spy, who had been stationed on an adjacent hill, came in great haste to report that he saw clouds of dust rising in the direction of Damgan, and approaching towards us, on the road leading to Meshed.

Immediately we were all upon the alert. The Turcomans left their prisoners bound hand and foot, on the spot where we had rested, with the intention of returning to take them up as soon as we should have rifled the caravan, and, fully equipped,

we sallied forth with great caution, determined on blood and plunder.

Aslan himself proceeded before the rest, in order to reconnoitre; and calling me to him, said, 'Now, Hajji, here is an opportunity for distinguishing yourself. You shall accompany me; and you will observe the precautions I use previous to showing our whole body, which it may be necessary for you to know, in order that you may be able to conduct such an enterprise yourself on some future occasion. I take you with me, in case I should be obliged to use an interpreter: for frequently in these caravans there is not a person who understands our language. We will approach as near as we can, perhaps have a parley with the conductor, and if we cannot make terms with him, we will fall on with our whole party.'

As the travellers approached, I perceived that Aslan Sultan became uneasy. 'This is no caravan, I fear,' said he; 'they march in too compact a body: besides, I hear no bells; the dust is too great in one spot. I see spears!—it is an immense cavalcade—five led horses!—this is no game for us.'

In fact, as they approached, it was easy to discover that it was no caravan, but some great personage, the governor of a province at least, who was travelling, attended by a numerous escort of horsemen and servants, and with all the pomp and glitter usual on such occasions.

My heart leaped within me when I saw this, for here was an excellent opportunity for escape. Could I approach near enough to be taken prisoner by them, without exciting any previous suspicion in my master, I should be safe; and although I might be ill-treated at first, still I trusted to my eloquence to make my story believed. Accordingly, I said to my companion, 'Let us approach nearer; and, without waiting for his permission, I excited my horse onwards. He immediately followed, with an intention of stopping me; but we had no sooner cleared the small elevated ground behind which we had posted ourselves, than we came in full view of the whole party, and were scarcely a bow-shot from them. As soon as we were discovered, some six or seven of their best horsemen were

detached from the rest of the body, and, at the fullest speed of their horses, came towards us. We turned about to fly: as much as Aslan urged on his steed, so much did I restrain mine; and by this manœuvre I was very soon overtaken and seized. To be knocked off my horse, disarmed, plundered of my fifty ducats, my razors and all my other effects, was but the business of a few seconds; and although I assured my new masters that I was in no intention to leave them, still they persisted in tying my arms behind me, with my own shawl, which they took from round my waist for that purpose. Thus pinioned, and receiving blows every now and then, because I did not move fast enough, I was dragged before their chief, who had made a halt, surrounded by his attendants.

From the sort of attentions which he received, and the low inclinations of the body that were made before him, I imagined that he must be a royal personage, and I was soon informed as much when I came near; for several blows on the head were given me, as hints to make me prostrate myself before a shahzadeh, or prince. A large circle being made, he ordered me to be released, and as soon as I felt myself free, at one bound I disengaged myself from those near me, and seizing upon the skirt of his cloak, as he was seated on his horse, exclaimed, '*Penah be shahzadeh!* protection from the Prince.' One of the guards rushed forward to punish my audacity; but the prince would not allow the sacred custom to be infringed, and promised me his protection. Ordering his servants not to molest me, he, at the same time, commanded me to relate how I came to be placed in the predicament in which I now stood.

Falling on my knees, and kissing the ground, I related my story in as concise a manner as possible; and, to corroborate all that I had said, added, that if he would order his horsemen to attack the party of Turcomans, who still were close at hand, they might release the king's poet, with two other Persians, who were prisoners in their hands, and they would fully confirm all that I had asserted.

I had no sooner said this than the horsemen, who had

pursued. Aslan Sultan, returned, with looks of great dismay, swearing by Ali and by the head of the king, that an immense body of Turcomans, at least 1000 strong, were marching down upon us, and that the prince must prepare to fight. In vain I explained to them that they were only twenty in number,—nobody would believe me: I was treated as a spy and a liar, and every one said that if the Turcomans did attack, they would put me to death on the spot. The party then proceeded onwards at a good pace, looking about in all directions for the expected enemy, and betraying all those symptoms of apprehension which the very name of Turcoman excites throughout the whole of Persia.

My own horse had been taken from me, and I was permitted to ride upon a baggage mule, where I had time to ponder over my wretched fate and miserable prospects. Without a farthing in my pocket, without a friend, I saw nothing before me but starvation. I had not yet become a sufficiently good Mussulman to receive comfort from predestination, and I absolutely sobbed aloud at my own folly, for having voluntarily been the cause of my present misery. That fond partiality for my own countrymen, which used to predominate so powerfully in my breast when I was a prisoner, entirely forsook me here, and I cursed them aloud.

‘You call yourselves Mussulmans!’ said I to those around me: ‘you have not the feelings of dogs. Dogs, did I say? You are worse than Christian dogs—the Turcomans are men compared to you.’

Then when I found that this sort of language only produced laughter in my auditors, I tried what entreaty would do. ‘For the love of Imâm Hossein, for the sake of the Prophet, by the souls of your children, why do you treat a stranger thus? Am I not a Mussulman like yourselves? What have I done that I should be made to devour this grief? I sought refuge amongst you as friends, and I am thrust away as an enemy.’

For all this I got no consolation, excepting from an old muleteer, by name Ali Kâtir, who had just lighted his kâlian, or water-pipe, and giving it to me to smoke, said, ‘My son,

everything in this world is in the hand of God.' Pointing to the mule upon which he rode, he added, 'If God has made this animal white, can Ali Kâtir make it black? It one day gets a feed of corn; on the next it browses upon a thistle. Can we contend with fate? Smoke your pipe now and be happy, and be thankful that it is no worse with you. Hafiz says, "Every moment of pleasure that you enjoy, account it gain:"—who can say what will be the event of anything?'

This speech of the muleteer soothed me a little, and as he found that I was as well versed in Hafiz as he, and not backward in permitting myself to be comforted, he treated me with much kindness, and made me a partaker of his mess during the remainder of the journey. He informed me that 'the prince, into whose hands I had fallen, was the Shah's fifth son, who had lately been installed in the government of the province of Khorassan, and was now on his road to Meshed, the seat of his jurisdiction. He was escorted by a greater number of attendants than ordinary, on account of the alarming state of the Turcoman frontier, and it was said that he had instructions to commence very active operations against that people, as many of whose heads as possible he was invited to send to Tehran, to be piled up before the gate of the royal palace; 'and you may account yourself very fortunate,' added the muleteer, 'that yours was not taken off your shoulders. Had you happened to be fair, with little eyes, and without much hair, instead of being a dark man, as you are, you certainly would have been put to death, and your head have been pickled, and made to pass for that of a Turcoman.'

When we had reached our resting-place at night, which was a lonely caravanserai half in ruins, situated on the skirts of the desert, I determined to endeavour to procure admittance to the prince, and to make an effort to regain my fifty ducats, and my horse and arms, which I made no scruple in claiming as my own, notwithstanding a certain little voice within me, which told me that another had almost as much right to them as I had. I accordingly watched an opportunity, just before the evening prayer, of presenting myself to him. He was seated

on a carpet that had been spread on the terrace of the caravanserai, reposing himself on his cushion, and before his attendants had time to beat me off, I exclaimed, '*Arsi darum*, I have a petition to make.' Upon which he ordered me to approach, and asked me what I wanted. I complained of the treatment I had received from his servants who had first seized me—related how they had robbed me of my fifty ducats; and then entreated that my horse and arms might be restored to me. He inquired of those surrounding him who the men were that I complained of, and when their names were mentioned he sent his chief tent-pitcher to conduct them to him. As soon as they appeared, for they were two, I recognised the aggressors, and affirmed them to be such to the prince.

'Sons of dogs,' said he to them, 'where is the money you stole from this man?'

'We took nothing,' they immediately exclaimed.

'We shall soon see that,' answered he. 'Call the *ferashes*,' said he to one of his officers, 'and let them beat the rogues on the soles of their feet till they produce the fifty ducats.'

They were immediately seized, and when their feet were in the air, strongly tied in the noose, and after receiving a few blows, they confessed that they had taken the money, and produced it. It was forthwith carried to the prince, who deliberately counted it over, and, putting it under the cushion upon which he was reclining, released the culprits, and said in a loud voice to me, 'You are dismissed.' I stood with my mouth wide open, hoping to see the money handed over to me, when his master of the ceremonies took me by the shoulders and pushed me away. I exclaimed, 'And my money, where is it?'

'What does he say?' said the prince: 'give him the shoe if he speaks again.'—When the master of the ceremonies, taking off his high green slipper, struck me over the mouth with the heel of it, shod with iron, saying, 'Do you speak to a king's son thus? Go in peace, and keep your eyes open, or you'll have your ears cut off;'—and so I was pushed and dragged violently away.

I returned in utter despair to my muleteer, who appeared not in the least surprised at what had happened, and said, 'What could you expect more? After all, is he not a prince? When once he or any man in power gets possession of a thing, do you think that they will ever restore it? You might as well expect a mule to give up a mouthful of fresh grass, when once it has got it within its mouth, as a prince to give up money that has once been in his hands.'

CHAPTER IX

HAJJÍ BABA, IN HIS DISTRESS, BECOMES A SAKA, OR WATER-CARRIER

WE reached Meshed in due time, and the prince made his solemn entry, amidst all the noise, parade, and confusion, attendant upon such ceremonies. I found myself a solitary being, in a strange city, distant from my friends, and from any creature to whom I might look for assistance, and without even a pair of razors to comfort me. When I looked at my present means, I found that they consisted of five tomauns,—which I had managed to secrete from the sack I had stolen in the caravanserai, and which I had put between the lining of my cap,—of a brown woollen coat, of a sheep-skin jacket, a shirt, a pair of trousers, and a heavy pair of boots. I had lived upon the muleteer as long as he enjoyed the daily allowance of provisions that he received during the time when he was attached to the suite of the prince; but now that he and his mules were discharged, I could not expect that he should continue to support me. I thought of again taking to my profession; but who would trust their throats to a man who had the reputation of being a Turcoman spy? Besides, although I might purchase razors, yet my means were not large enough to set up a shop, and I was determined not to become a journeyman.

My friend, the muleteer, who knew the ways and means of Meshed, recommended me strongly to become a saka, or water-carrier. 'You are young, and strong,' said he: 'you have a good voice, and would entice people to drink by an harmonious cry. You have, besides, a great talent for cant and palaver, and for laughing at one's beard. The number of pilgrims who come to Meshed to perform their devotions at the tomb of the Imâm

is great, and, charity being one of the principal instruments which they use for the salvation of their souls, they give freely to those who promise them the best reward. You must sell each draught in the name and for the sake of Imâm Hossein; for he, you know, is the favourite saint of all the sectaries of Ali. Always offer it gratis; but be sure you get money in hand before you pour it out; and when your customer has drunk, say, with great emphasis, 'May your draught be propitious! May the holy Imâm take you under his protection! May you never suffer the thirst of the blessed Hossein!' and suchlike sort of speeches, which you must chant out so loud that everybody may hear you. In short, to devotees who come some hundreds of parasangs to say their prayers, you may say anything and everything, and you will be sure to be believed. I myself have been a saka at Meshed, and know the trade. It has enabled me to buy a string of mules, and to be the man you see.'

I followed my friend's advice. I forthwith laid out my money in buying a leather sack, with a brass cock, which I slung round my body, and also a bright drinking-cup. After having filled it with water, and let it soak for some time, in order to do away the bad smell of the leather, I sallied forth, and proceeded to the tomb, where I immediately began my operations. The cry I adopted was 'Water, water! in the name of the Imâm, water.' This I chanted with all the force and swell of my lungs, and having practised under the tuition of the muleteer for two days before, I was assured that I acquitted myself as well as the oldest practitioners. As soon as I appeared, I immediately drew the attention of the other sakas, who seemed to question the right I had to exercise their profession. When I showed myself at the reservoir to draw water, they would have quarrelled with me, and one attempted to push me in; but they found me resolute, and that my resolution was backed by a set of strong and active limbs, and therefore they confined themselves to abusive language, of which, being the entire master, I soon got the lead, and completely silenced them. Nature, in fact, seemed to have

intended me for a saka. The water which I had a moment before drawn from a filthy reservoir I extolled as having flowed from a spring created by Ali in person, equal to the sacred well of Zem Zem, and a branch of the river which flows through Paradise. It is inconceivable how it was relished, and how considerable was the money I received for giving it gratis. I was always on the watch to discover when a new set of pilgrims should arrive, and before they had even alighted from their mules, all dusty from the road, and all happy at having escaped the Turcomans, I plied them in the name of the Prophet with a refreshing draught, and made them recollect that, this being the first devotional act which they performed on reaching Meshed, so out of gratitude for their safe arrival, they ought to reward me liberally; and my admonitions were scarcely ever disregarded.

The commemoration of the death of Hossein, which is so religiously kept throughout Persia, was now close at hand, and I determined to put myself into training to appear as the water-carrier, who on the last day of the festival, which is held the most sacred, performs a conspicuous character in the tragedy. This was to be acted in public before the prince in the great open square of the city, and I expected to acquire much reputation and profit from the feat of strength which I should perform, which consists of carrying an immense sack full of water on the back, accompanied by additional exertions. I had a rival, who accomplished the task on the last festival; but as the sack I was about to carry contained infinitely more water than he could support, my claim to superiority was not to be disputed. However, I was advised to be on my guard, for he was of a jealous character, and would not lose an opportunity of doing me an injury if he could. When the day arrived, the prince being seated in an upper room situated over the gate of his palace, and the whole population of the city assembled to witness the religious ceremonies, I appeared naked to the waist, with my body streaming with blood, slowly walking under the weight of my immense sack. Having reached the window at which the prince was seated, I attracted his notice by loud exclamations for his happiness and prosperity.

He threw me down a gold coin, and expressed himself pleased with my performance. In my exultation I invited several boys, who were near at hand for the purpose, to pile themselves upon my load, which they did, to the astonishment of the crowd, who encouraged me by their cries and applause. I called for another boy, when my rival, who had watched his opportunity, sprung forwards and mounted himself on the very top of all, hoping, no doubt, to crush me: but, exerting myself to the utmost of my strength, I carried my burthen clean off, amidst the animating shouts of the staring multitude. But although in the heat of the exertion I felt no inconvenience, yet when I was disencumbered I found that my back was sprained so severely, that I was totally unfitted for the trade of a water-carrier for the future. I therefore sold my sack and other articles, and, with the money that I had gained in water-selling, found myself well off, compared to the deplorable situation in which I was on my arrival at Meshed. My friend the muleteer had departed some time before the festival with a caravan for Tehran, so I was deprived of his counsels. I should have demanded justice for the injury done me by my rival, and might have dragged him before the *cadi*; but I was assured that in the Mohammedan law there is no provision made for a sprain. It is written an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but there is no sprain for a sprain. Had I had some powerful protector, who would have prosecuted the business for me, perhaps I might have got redress; but a miserable creature like myself, unknown and unfriended, I could have gained nothing, and perhaps should have stood a chance of losing the little money I had acquired.

CHAPTER X

HE MAKES A SOLILOQUY, AND BECOMES AN ITINERANT
VENDOR OF SMOKE

I HELD a consultation with myself as to what I should do next for my livelihood. Various walks in life were open to me. The begging line was an excellent one in Meshed, and, judging from my success as a water-carrier, I should very soon have been at the head of the profession. I might also have become a *lûti*,¹ and kept a bear; but it required some apprenticeship to learn the tricks of the one, and to know how to tame the other: so I gave that up. Still I might have followed my own profession, and have taken a shop; but I could not bear the thoughts of settling, particularly in so remote a town as Meshed. At length I followed the bent of my inclination, and, as I was myself devotedly fond of smoking, I determined to become an itinerant seller of smoke. Accordingly I bought pipes of various sizes, a wooden tray, containing the pipe-heads, which was strapped round my waist, an iron pot for fire, which I carried in my hand, a pair of iron pincers, a copper jug for water, that was suspended by a hook behind my back, and some long bags for my tobacco. All these commodities were fastened about my body, and when I was fully equipped, I might be said to look like a porcupine with all its quills erect. My tobacco was of various sorts—Tabas, Shiraz, Susa, and Damascus. It is true that I was not very scrupulous about giving it pure; for with a very small quantity of the genuine leaf I managed to make a large store, with the assistance of different sorts of dungs. I had a great tact in discovering

¹ The *lûtis* are privileged buffoons, usually keeping monkeys, bears, and other animals.

amongst my customers the real connoisseur, and to him I gave it almost genuine. My whole profits, in fact, depended upon my discrimination of characters. To those of the middling ranks, I gave it half-mixed; to the lower sort, three-quarters; and to the lowest, almost without any tobacco at all. Whenever I thought I could perceive a wry face, I immediately exerted my ingenuity in favour of the excellence of my tobacco. I showed specimens of the good, descanted on its superior qualities, and gave the history of the very gardener who had reared it, and pledged myself to point out the very spot in his grounds where it grew.

I became celebrated in Meshed for the excellence of my pipes. My principal customer was a dervish, who was so great a connoisseur that I never dared to give him any but pure tobacco; and although I did not gain much by his custom, as he was not very exact in his payments, yet his conversation was so agreeable, and he recommended so many of his friends to me, that I cultivated his goodwill to the utmost of my power.

Dervish Sefer (for that was his name) was a man of a peculiar aspect. He had a large aquiline nose, piercing black eyes, a thick beard, and a great quantity of jet black hair flowing over his shoulders. His conical cap was embroidered all over with sentences from the Koran, and holy invocations: the skin of a red deer was fastened loosely upon his back, with the hairy side outwards: he bore in hand a long steel staff, which he generally carried on his shoulder, and in the other a calabash, suspended by three chains, which he extended whenever he deigned to ask the charity of passengers. In his girdle he wore large agate clasps, from which hung a quantity of heavy wooden beads; and, as he swung himself along through the streets and bazaars, there was so much of wildness and solicitude in all his words and actions, that he did not fail to inspire a certain awe in all beholders. This, I afterwards learnt, was put on, in order to suit the character which he had adopted; for when he smoked my pipes, if no one chanced to be present, he was the most natural and unreserved of beings. Our

acquaintance soon improved into intimacy, and at length he introduced me into a small circle of dervishes, men of his own turn and profession, with whom he lived almost exclusively, and I was invited to frequent their meetings. It is true that this did not suit my views in the smoking line, for they amongst them consumed more of my good tobacco than all the rest of my other customers put together; but their society was so agreeable that I could not resist the temptation.

Dervish Sefer, one evening when he had smoked more than usual, said to me, 'Hajji Baba, you are too much of a man to be a seller of smoke all your life:—why do you not turn dervish, like us? We hold men's beards as cheap as dirt; and although our existence is precarious, yet it is one of great variety, as well as of great idleness. We look upon mankind as fair game—we live upon their weakness and credulity; and, from what I have seen of you, I think you would do honour to our profession, and in time become as celebrated as even the famous Sheikh Saadi himself.' This speech was applauded by the other two, who pressed my entering upon their profession. I was nothing loath, but I pleaded my ignorance of the necessary qualifications. 'How is it possible,' said I, 'that a being so ignorant and unexperienced as I am can at once attain to all the learning requisite for a dervish? I know how to read and write, 'tis true; I have gone through the Koran, and have my Hafiz and Saadi nearly by heart; besides which, I have read a great part of the Shah Nameh of Ferdûsi, but beyond that, I am totally ignorant.' 'Ah, my friend,' said Dervish Sefer, 'little do you know of dervishes, and still less of human-kind. It is not great learning that is required to make a dervish; assurance is the first ingredient. With one-fiftieth part of the accomplishments that you have mentioned, and with only a common share of effrontery, I promise you, that you may command not only the purses, but even the lives of your hearers. By impudence I have been a prophet, by impudence I have wrought miracles, by impudence I have restored the dying to health—by impudence, in short, I lead a life of great ease, and am feared and respected by those who,

like you, do not know what dervishes are. If I chose to give myself the trouble, and incur the risks which Mohammed himself did, I might even now become as great a prophet as he. It would be as easy for me to cut the moon in two with my finger as it was for him, provided I once made my hearers have confidence in me ; and impudence will do that, and more, if exerted in a proper manner.' When Dervish Sefer had done talking, his companions applauded what he had said, and they related so many curious anecdotes of the feats which they had performed, that I became very anxious to know more of these extraordinary men. They promised to relate the history of their lives at our next meeting, and, in the meanwhile, recommended me strongly to turn my thoughts to a line of life more dignified, and fuller of enjoyment, than that of a vagabond seller of adulterated smoke.

CHAPTER XI

HISTORY OF DERVISH SEFER, AND OF THE TWO OTHER DERVISHES

WHEN we had again collected ourselves together, each with a pipe in his hand, seated with our backs against the wall, in a room, the window of which opened into a small square planted with flowers, Dervish Sefer, as the acknowledged chief of our society, began his story in the following words:—

‘ I am the son of the Lúti Bashi, or head Merry-Andrew of the Prince of Shiraz, by a celebrated courtesan of the name of Taous, or the Peacock. With such parents, I leave you to imagine the education which I received. My principal associates, during my infancy, were the monkeys and bears that belonged to my father and his friends, and, perhaps, it is to the numerous tricks in which they were instructed, and to the facility with which they learnt them, that I am indebted for the talent of mimicry that has been of so much use to me through life. At fifteen I was an accomplished lúti. I could eat fire, spout water, and perform all sorts of sleight of hand, and I should very probably have continued to prosper in this profession, had not the daughter of the prince’s general of camel artillery become enamoured of me, as I danced on the tight-rope before the court on the festival of the New Year’s Day. A young camel-driver under his orders had a sister who served in the harem of the general: he was my most intimate friend, and his sister gave him the intelligence of the effect my appearance had produced upon her mistress. I immediately went to a mírza or scribe, who lived in a small shed in a corner of the bazaar, and requested of him to write a love-letter for me, with as much red ink in it as possible, and crossed and re-crossed with all the complication he could devise. Nothing

could be better than this composition—for at the very outset it informed my mistress that I was dead, and that my death was owing to the fire of her eyes, that had made roast-meat of my heart. Notwithstanding this assertion, I ventured at the end to say that as I had never yet seen her, I hoped that she would contrive to grant me an interview. In the joy of my heart for the possession of such a letter, in great confidence I told the scribe who my charmer was, which he had no sooner heard, than, hoping to receive a present for his trouble, forthwith went and informed the general himself of the fact. That the son of the Lûti Bashi should dare to look up to the daughter of Zambûrekchi Bashi was a crime not to be forgiven, and as the latter had influence at court, he procured an order for my instant removal from Shiraz. My father did not wish to incur the prince's displeasure, and fearing, from my growing celebrity, that I should very soon rival him in his own profession, he rather urged than delayed my departure. On the morning when I was about quitting Shiraz, and was bidding adieu to my friends the monkeys, bears, and other animals under his care, he said to me, "Sefer, my son, I should be sorry to part with you; but with the education which you have received, and the peculiar advantages which you have had of living almost entirely in the society of me and my beasts, it is impossible but that you will succeed in life. I now endow you with what will ensure you a rapid fortune. I give you my chief ape, the most accomplished of his species. Make a friend of him for your own sake, and love him for mine; and I hope in time that you will reach the eminence to which your father has attained." Upon this he placed the animal upon my shoulder, and thus accompanied I left the paternal roof.

'I took the road to Ispahan in no very agreeable mood, for I scarcely knew whether to be happy or sorry for this change in my circumstances. A monkey and independence were certainly delightful things; but to leave my associates, and the places that were endeared to me from my infancy, and above all, to abandon that fair unknown, whom my imagination had pictured to me as lovely as Shireen herself, were circumstances

which appeared to me so distressing, that by the time I had reached the hut of the dervish, at the Teng Allah Akbar, my mind was excited into a violent fit of despondency. I seated myself on a stone near the hut, and with my monkey by my side, I gave vent to my grief in a flood of tears, exclaiming, "*Ah wahi! Ah wahi!*" in accents the most piteous that can be imagined.

'These brought the dervish out, and when he had heard my tale, he invited me into the hut, where I found another dervish, of much more commanding aspect than the former. He was clad nearly in the same manner that I am now (indeed, the cap I wear was his); but there was a wildness about his looks that was quite imposing.

'At the sight of me and my companion, he appeared to be struck by a sudden thought. He and the other dervish having talked together in private, he proposed to me that I should accompany him to Ispahan, promised that he would be kind to me, and, if I behaved well, would put me in the way of making my fortune. I readily agreed, and after the dervish of the hut had given us a pipe to smoke, we departed, walking at a good pace, without much being said between us during some time. Dervish Bideen, for that was his name, at length began to question me very closely about my former life, and hearing in what my accomplishments consisted, seemed to be well pleased. He then descanted upon the advantages attending the life of a dervish, proved them to be superior to the low pursuits of a *lûti*, and at length persuaded me to embrace his profession. He told me, that if I would look upon him as my master, he would teach me all he knew, and *that*, he assured me, was no small portion of knowledge, inasmuch as he was esteemed the most perfect dervish in Persia. He began to talk to me of magic and astrology, and gave me various receipts for making spells and charms, to serve on every occasion in life; by the sale of which alone I should be able to make my fortune. The tail of a hare, placed under the pillow of a child, he assured me, produces sleep; and its blood, given to a horse, makes him fleet and long-winded. The eye and the knuckle-

bones of a wolf, attached to a boy's person, gives him courage; and its fat, rubbed on a woman, will convert her husband's love into indifference: its gall, used in the same manner, produces fruitfulness. But the article which bore the greatest price in the seraglios was the kûs keftar, the dried skin of a female hyena; which, if worn about the person, conciliated the affection of all to the wearer. He discoursed long upon these and suchlike subjects, until he gradually excited so much interest in my heart, by thus placing my fortune apparently in full view, that at length he ventured to make a proposal, which he easily judged would be disagreeable.

"Sefer," said he to me, "you know not the treasure you possess in that ape,—I do not mean as he stands now alive, but dead. If he were dead, I could extract such ingredients from him to make charms, which would sell for their weight in gold in the harem of the Shah. You must know that the liver of an ape, and on y of that particular species which you possess, is sure to bring back the love of a desired object to the person who may possess it. Then the skin of its nose, if worn round the neck, is a decisive preventive against poisons; and the ashes of the animal itself, after it has been burnt over a slow fire, will, if taken internally, give all the qualities of the ape, cunning, adroitness, and the powers of imitation." He then proposed that we should kill the beast.

'I was certainly alarmed at the proposal. I had been brought up with my ape: we had hitherto gone through life together in prosperity as well as in adversity; and to lose him in this barbarous manner was more than I could bear. I was about to give a flat refusal to the dervish, when I observed that his countenance, which hitherto had been all smiles and good humour, had changed to downright furiousness: and fearing that he would take by force that which I could not protect, I, with all the reluctance imaginable, consented to the execution of his project. We then deviated from the road; and having got into a solitary glen, we gathered together some dry stubble and underwood, made a fire, striking a light with a flint and steel, which my companion carried about him. He took my

poor ape into his hands, and, without further ceremony, put it to death. He then dissected it; and having taken from it the liver, and the skin off its nose, he burnt it in the pile we had made; and when all was over, he carefully collected the ashes, which having packed in a corner of his handkerchief, we proceeded on our journey.

‘We reached Ispahan in due time, where I exchanged such parts of my dress as belonged to the *lûti* for the garb of a dervish, and then we proceeded to Tehran. Here my master’s appearance produced great effect; for no sooner was it known that he was arrived, than all sorts of people flocked to consult him. Mothers wanted protection for their children against the evil eye; wives a spell against the jealousy of their husbands; warriors talismans to secure them from harm in battle. But the ladies of the king’s seraglio were his principal customers. Their most urgent demand was some powerful charm to ensure the attention of the king. The collection of materials for this purpose, which the Dervish Bideen had made, was very great. He had the hairs of a lynx, the back-bone of an owl, and bear’s grease in various preparations. To one of the ladies, who owing to her advanced age, was more pressing than the others, he sold the liver of my monkey, assuring her, that as soon as she appeared, wearing it about her person, his majesty would distinguish her from her rivals. To another, who complained that she was never in favour, and frustrated in all her schemes to attract notice, he administered a decoction of the monkey’s ashes; and to a third, who wanted a charm to drive away wrinkles, he gave an ointment, which, if properly applied, and provided she did not laugh, or otherwise move the muscles of her face, would effectually keep them smooth.

‘I was initiated into all these mysteries, and frequently was a party concerned in a fraud, whenever my master was put to the necessity of doing something supernatural to support his credit, if by chance his spells were palpably of no avail. But whatever profit arose either from these services, or from the spoils of my monkey, he alone was the gainer, for I never touched a *ghauz*¹ of it.

¹ A *ghaus* is a small copper coin.

'I accompanied the Dervish Bideen into various countries, where we practised our art; sometimes we were adored as saints, and at other times stoned for vagrants. As our journeys were performed on foot, I had an opportunity to see every place in the greatest detail. We travelled from Tehran to Constantinople, and from that capital to Grand Cairo, through Aleppo and Damascus. From Cairo we showed ourselves at Mecca and Medina; and taking ship at Jedda, landed at Surat, in the Guzerat, whence we walked to Lahore and Cashmire.

'At this last place, the dervish, according to custom, endeavoured to deceive the natives; but they were too enlightened for us, and we were obliged to steal away in great disgrace; and we at length fixed ourselves at Herat, where we were repaid for our former want of success by the credulity of the Afghans, who were good enough to admit all that we chose to tell them. But here, as the dervish was getting up a plan to appear as a prophet, and when our machinery for performing miracles was nearly completed, he, who had promised eternal youth to thousands, at length paid the debt of nature himself. He shut himself up in a small hut, situated at the top of a mountain near Herat, where we made the good people believe that he was living upon no other food than that which the Gins and Peris brought to him; but unfortunately he actually died of a surfeit, having eaten more of a roast lamb and sweetmeats than his nature could support. For my own credit I was obliged to say that the Gins, jealous of us mortals for possessing the society of so wonderful a person, had inflated him with celestial food to such a degree, that, leaving no room for his soul, it had been completely blown out of his body, and carried away into the fifth heaven by a strong north-east wind, which was blowing at the time. This wind, which lasts for 120 days during the summer months, and without which the inhabitants would almost die with heat, I endeavoured to make them believe was a miracle performed by the dervish in their favour, as a parting legacy to them and their descendants for ever. The old men, indeed, who recollected the wind ever since their youth, were incredulous; but their testimony bore but little

weight, compared to the influence which we had acquired. He was buried with the greatest honours; and the prince of Herat himself, Eshak Mirza, lent his shoulder to bear his coffin to the grave. A mausoleum was erected over it by some of the most pious of the Afghans, and it has ever since been a place of pilgrimage from all the country round.

‘I remained at Herat for some time after the death of my companion, in order to enjoy the advantages which might accrue to me from being the friend and disciple of one of such high reputation, and I did not repent of my resolution. I disposed of my spells at great prices, and moreover made a considerable sum by selling the combings of my deceased friend’s beard, and the cuttings of his nails, which I assured my purchasers I had carefully preserved during the time of his retirement in the mountains; although in fact they were chiefly collected from my own person. When I had sold of these relics enough to make several respectable beards, and a proportionate quantity of nails, I felt that if I persisted in this traffic, notwithstanding the inordinate credulity of the Afghans, I might be discovered for a cheat: therefore I took my departure, and, after having travelled into various parts of Persia, I at length fixed myself for some time among the Hezareh, a large tribe, living for the most part in tents, and which occupy the open country between Cabul and Candahar. My success among them was something quite beyond my expectation, for I put into practice what the Dervish Bideen had planned at Herat, and actually appeared in the character of a prophet.’

Here the Dervish Sefer, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the dervish who sat next to him, said, ‘My friend, here, was my accomplice on that occasion, and he will remember how ingeniously we managed to make the Hezareh believe that we possessed a caldron which was always full of boiled rice—a miracle which even the most incredulous did not fail to believe, as long as they got their share of it. In short, I am the celebrated Hazret Ishan himself; he of whom you have lately heard so much in Khorassan; and although my sacred character was not proof against the attacks made upon it by the arms of

the Shah, yet, while it lasted, I collected enough from the zeal and credulity of my disciples to enable me to pass the remainder of my life in comfort. I have lived at Meshed for some time; and it is but a week ago that we contrived to perform the miracle of giving sight to a blind girl; so now are held in the highest veneration.'

Here the Dervish Sefer ended his history, and then called upon his next neighbour to give an account of himself.

This was the dervish who had been his accomplice among the Hezareh, and he began as follows:—

'My father was a celebrated man of the law, of the city of Kom, enjoying the reputation of saying his prayers, making his ablutions, and keeping his fasts more regularly than any man in Persia: in short, he was the cream of Shīahs, and the model of Mussulmans. He had many sons, and we were brought up in the strictest practice of the external parts of our religion. The rigour and severity with which we were treated were combated on our part by cunning and dissimulation. These qualities gradually fixed themselves in our character; and, without any consideration for our circumstances, we were early branded as a nest of hypocrites, and as the greatest cheats and liars of our birthplace. I, in particular, was so notorious, that in my own defence I became a dervish, and I owe the reputation which I have acquired in that calling to the following fortunate circumstance.

'I had scarcely arrived at Tehran, and had taken up my quarters opposite to a druggist's shop, when I was called up in a great hurry by an old woman, who informed me that her master, the druggist, had just been taken exceedingly ill, after having eaten more than usual; that the medicine which he had taken had not performed its office; and that his family wished to try what a talisman would do for him: she therefore invited me to write one suited to his case. As I had neither paper, pens, nor ink, I insisted on going into his *anderûn*, or women's apartments, and writing it there, to which she consented. I was introduced into a small square yard, and then into a room, where I found the sick man extended on his bed on the

ground, surrounded by as many women as the place could hold, who cried aloud, and exclaimed, "*wahi, wahi*, in the name of God, he dies, he dies!" The implements of medicine were spread about, which showed that everything had been done either to kill or save him. A large basin, which had contained the prescription, was seen on the shelf; the long glass tube, that instrument of torture, was in a corner; and among other furniture, the doctor himself was seen seated, quietly smoking, and who, finding that all human means had failed, had had recourse to supernatural, and had prescribed as a last resource, the talisman, which it was my fate to write. A new dervish excited new hopes, for I saw that I produced much stir as soon as I entered the sick-room. I asked for paper with an air of authority, as if I felt great confidence in my own powers (although, in fact, I had never written a talisman before), and a large piece was brought to me, which seemed to have been the wrapper to some drug or other. Pen and ink were also given to me, and then calling up all the gravity I was master of, I scrawled the paper over in a variety of odd characters, which here and there contained the names of Allah, Mohammed, Ali, Hassan, and Hossein, and all the Imâms, placing them in different anagrams, and substituting here and there figures instead of letters. I then handed it over with great ceremony to the doctor, who, calling for water and a basin, washed the whole of the writing from off the paper into the basin, whilst the bystanders offered up prayers for the efficacy of the precious writing. The doctor then said, "In the name of the Prophet, let the patient take this; and if fate hath decreed that he is to live, then the sacred names which he will now swallow will restore him; but if not, neither my skill, nor that of any other man, can ever be of the least avail."

'The draught was administered, and, for some time after, the eyes of all around were fixed upon the wretched man's face, as if they expected that a resuscitation would instantly ensue. He remained for some time without showing any symptom of life; when, to the astonishment of all, not excepting myself and the doctor, he groaned, opened his eyes, raised

his head on his arm, then called for a basin, and at length vomited in such a manner as would have done credit to the prescription of Abu Avicenna himself. In short, he recovered.

‘In my own mind, I immediately attributed the happy change to the drug which had once been wrapped in the paper, and which, with the nausea of the ink, had produced the effect just described ; but I took care to let the bystanders know that the cure was entirely owing to the interference, and to the hand-writing, of one of my sanctity ; and that but for me he would have died.

‘The doctor, on the other hand, took all the merit of the case to himself ; for as soon as his patient opened his eyes, he exclaimed, “Did I not tell you so ?” and in proportion as the draught operated, he went on exulting thus : “There, there, see the efficacy of my prescription ! If it had not been for me, you would have seen the druggist dead before you.”

‘I, however, would not allow him to proceed, and said : “If you are a doctor, why did you not cure him without calling for me ? Keep to your blisters and to your bleedings, and do not interfere with that which doth not belong to you.”

‘He answered, “Mr. Dervish, I make no doubt that you can write a very good talisman, and also can get a very good price for it ; but every one knows who and what dervishes are ; and if their talismans are ever of use, it is not their sanctity which makes them so.”

“Whose dog are you,” exclaimed I, in return, “to talk to me after this manner ? I, who am a servant of the Prophet. As for you doctors, your ignorance is proverbial : you hide it by laying all to fate : if by chance your patient recovers, then you take all the credit of the cure to yourselves ; should he die, you say, God hath decreed thus ; what can the efforts of man avail ? Go to, go to ; when you have nearly killed your next patient, and then know not what more to ordain, send for me again, and I will cover your impudent ignorance by curing him as I have just done the druggist.”

“By my head, and by your death,” returned the doctor, “I am not a man to hear this from any one, much less from a dog

of a dervish :” and immediately he got up, and approached me in a threatening attitude, making use of every epithet of abuse that he could think of.

‘I received him with suitable expressions of contempt, and we very soon came to blows: he fastened upon my hair, and I upon his beard, with such violence, that we plucked out whole handfuls from each other: we bit and spat, and fought with such fury, heedless of the sick man and the cries of the women, that the uproar became very great, and perhaps would have terminated in something serious, if one of the women had not run in to us, in great agitation, assuring us that the Darogah’s officers (policemen) were then knocking at the door of the house, and inquiring whence proceeded all the disturbance.

‘This parted us; and then I was happy to find that the bystanders were in my favour, for they expressed their contempt of the skill of the physician, whose only object was to obtain money without doing his patients any good, whilst they looked upon me in the light of a divine person, who in my handwriting alone possessed the power of curing all manner of disease.

‘The doctor, seeing how ill matters were going for him, stole away with the best face he could; but before he left the room, he stooped down, and collecting as many of the hairs of his beard, which I had plucked from him, as he could find, to which he cunningly added some of my own hair, he brandished them in my face, saying, “We shall see on whose side the laugh will be when you are brought before the *cadi* to-morrow; for beards are worth a ducat¹ per hair in Tehran, and I doubt, with all your talismans, whether you can buy these that I hold in my hand.”

‘It was evident, that when his anger was cooled, out of regard to his own reputation, he would not put his threat into execution; so the fear of being dragged before the justice gave me no uneasiness, and I therefore only considered how to

¹ A beard is held so sacred in the East, that every hair which grows upon a Mohammedan’s chin is protected from molestation by a heavy fine.

make the most of the fortunate circumstance which had just taken place. The report that the druggist (who was the first in Tehran) had been brought to life, when on the point of death, by a newly arrived dervish, was soon spread about, and I became the object of general concern. From morning to night I was taken up in writing talismans, for which I made my customers pay according to their means, and in a short time I found myself the possessor of some hundreds of piastres. But unfortunately for me, I did not meet with a dying druggist and a piece of his paper every day; and feeling myself reduced to live upon the reputation of this one miracle, which I perceived to my sorrow daily diminished, I made a virtue of necessity, and determining to make the tour of Persia, I immediately left Tehran. To whichever city I bent my steps, I managed matters so adroitly, that I made my reputation precede my arrival there. The druggist had given me an attestation, under his seal, that he had been restored to life by virtue of a talisman written by my hand, and this I exhibited wherever I went, to corroborate the truth of the reports which had been circulated in my favour. I am now living upon this reputation; it supports me very tolerably for the present, but whenever I find it begins to fail, I shall proceed elsewhere.' The dervish here ended his history.

When the third dervish came to his turn to speak, he said: 'My tale is but short, although story-telling is my profession. I am the son of a schoolmaster, who, perceiving that I was endowed with a very retentive memory, made me read and repeat to him most of the histories with which our language abounds; and when he found that he had furnished my mind with a sufficient assortment, he turned me out into the world under the garb of dervish, to relate them in public to such audiences as my talents might gather round me.

'My first essays were anything but successful. My auditors heard my stories, and then walked away without leaving me any reward for my pains. Little by little I acquired experience. Instead of being carried away, as I had at first permitted myself to be, by the interest of the story, I made a pause when the

catastrophe drew near, and then, looking around me, said, "All ye that are present, if you will be liberal towards me, I will tell you what follows;" and I seldom failed in collecting a good handful of copper coin. For instance, in the story of the Prince of Khatai and the Princess of Samarcand, when the Ogre Hezar Mun seizes the prince, and is about to devour him; when he is suspended in the ogre's mouth, between his upper and lower jaw; when the princess, all dishevelled and forlorn, is on her knees praying that he may be spared; when the attendants couch their lances, and are in dismay; when the horses start back in fright; when the thunder rolls, and the ogre growls; then I stop, and say, "Now, my noble hearers, open your purses, and you shall hear in how miraculous a manner the Prince of Khatai cut the ogre's head off!" By such arts, I manage to extract a subsistence from the curiosity of men; and when my stock of stories is exhausted in one place, I leave it, travel to another, and there renew my labours.'

CHAPTER XII

HAJJI BABA FINDS THAT FRAUD DOES NOT REMAIN UNPUNISHED
EVEN IN THIS WORLD—HE MAKES FRESH PLANS

THE dervishes having finished their narratives, I thanked them for the entertainment and instruction which they had afforded me, and I forthwith resolved to learn as much from them as possible, in order to become a dervish myself, in case I should be obliged to abandon my present business. Dervish Sefer instructed me in the numerous tricks which he practised, to impose himself upon the world as a person of great sanctity; I learned the art of writing talismans from the second; and the story-teller taught me some of the tales with which his head was stored, lent me his books, and gave me general rules how to lead on the curiosity of an audience, until their money should insensibly be enticed from their pockets.

In the meanwhile, I continued to sell my tobacco and my pipes; but owing to my intimacy with the dervishes, who smoked away all my profits, I was obliged to adulterate the tobacco of my other customers considerably more than usual; so that in fact they enjoyed little else than the fumes of dung, straw, and decayed leaves.

One evening, when it was dusk, and about the time of closing the bazaars, an old woman in rags, apparently bent double with age, stopped me, and requested me to dress a pipe for her to smoke. She was closely veiled, and scarcely uttered a word beyond her want. I filled her one of my very worst mixture; she put it to her mouth; and at her spitting, coughing, and exclamations, half a dozen stout fellows, with long twigs in their hands, immediately came up, seized me, and

threw me on my back. The supposed old woman then cast off her veil, and I beheld the Mohtesib¹ in person.

'At length, wretch of an Ispahani!' said he, 'I have caught you—you, that have so long been poisoning the people of Meshed with your abominable mixtures. You shall receive as many strokes on your feet as you have received shahies² for your pipes.' 'Bring the felek,'³ said he, to his officers, 'and lay on till his nails drop off.'

My feet were instantly inserted into the dreaded noose, and the blows fell upon them so thick, that I soon saw the images of ten thousand Mohtesibs, intermixed with ten thousand old women, dancing before my eyes, apparently enjoying my torture, and laughing at my writhing and contortions. I implored the mercy of my tormentor by the souls of his father, mother, and grandfather—by his own head—by that of his child—and by that of his prince; by the Prophet—by Ali—and by all the Imâms. I cursed tobacco. I renounced smoking. I appealed to the feelings of the surrounding spectators, to my friends the three dervishes, who stood there stirring neither limb nor muscle for me; in short, I bawled, cried, entreated, until I entirely lost all sensation and all recollection.

At length, when I came to myself, I found myself seated with my head against the wall on the side of the road, surrounded by a crowd gaping at my miserable situation. No one seemed to pity me. My pipes, my jug, and everything that I possessed, had been taken from me, and I was left to crawl to my home as well as I was able. Luckily it was not far off, and I reached it on my hands and knees, making the most piteous moans imaginable.

After I had remained a day in horrid torment, with my feet

¹ The *Mohtesib* is an officer who perambulates the city, and examines weights and measures and qualities of provisions.

² Twenty *shahies* make the *groust* or piastre, which is worth about two shillings British.

³ The *felek* is a long pole, with a noose in the middle, through which the feet of him who is to be bastinadoed are passed, whilst its extremities are held up by two men, for the two others, who strike.

swelled into a misshapen mass of flesh and gore, I received a visit from one of the dervishes, who ventured to approach me, fearful, as he told me, of being taken up as my accomplice, in case he had come sooner to my help. He had, in his early career, undergone a similar beating himself, and, therefore, knew what remedies to apply to my limbs, which, in a short time, restored them to their former state.

During my confinement, I had time to reflect upon my situation. I determined to leave Meshed, for I felt that I had entered it at an unlucky hour. Once my back had been sprained, and once I had been bastinadoed. I had managed to collect a small sum of money, which I kept carefully buried in a corner near my room; and with this I intended to make my way to Tehran by the very first caravan that should be on its departure. I communicated my plan to the dervishes, who applauded it; and, moreover, the Dervish Sefer offered to accompany me; 'for,' said he, 'I have been warned that the priesthood of Meshed are jealous of my increasing influence, and that they are laying a plot for my ruin; and, as it is impossible to withstand their power, I will try my fortunes elsewhere.'

It was agreed that I should put on the dress of a dervish; and having made my purchases, in the bazaar, of a cap, some beads, and a goat's skin, which I slung across my shoulder, I was ready to begin my journey at a moment's warning.

We became so impatient to depart, that we had almost made up our minds to set off without any other companions, and trust to our good fortune to find our road, and escape the dangers of it; but we determined to take a *fall*¹ out of Saadi, before we came to a resolution. Dervish Sefer, after making the usual prayer, opened the book, and read: 'It is contrary to reason, and to the advice of the wise, to take medicine without confidence, or to travel an unknown road without accompanying the caravan.' This extraordinary warning settled our minds, and we determined to be guided by it.

¹ *Saadi*, *Hafis*, and the *Korān*, are the three books to which the Persians most willingly refer for this mode of divination. Its resemblance to that of the *Sortes Virgilianæ* must occur to every reader.

On making inquiries about the departure of caravans for Tehran, I was delighted to meet my friend Ali Kâtir, the muleteer, who had just arrived at Meshed, and was then making a bargain with a merchant, to take his merchandise, consisting of the lamb-skins of Bokhara, to the capital. As soon as he saw me, he uttered an exclamation of delight, and immediately lighted his water-pipe, which he invited me to smoke with him. I related all my adventures since we last parted, and he gave me an account of his. Having left Meshed with a caravan for Ispahan, with his mules loaded partly with bars of silver, and partly with lamb-skins; and having undergone great fears on account of the Turcomans—he reached his destination in safety. That city was still agitated with the recollections of the late attack of the caravanserai, of which I have given an account; and the general belief was, that the invaders had made their approach in a body, consisting of more than a thousand men; that they had been received with great bravery, and that one Kerbelai Hassan, a barber, had, with his own hand, wounded one of the chiefs so severely, that he had escaped with the greatest difficulty.

I had always kept this part of my adventures secret from everybody; so I hid any emotion that might appear on my face from the muleteer, by puffing out a sufficient volume of smoke in his face.

From Ispahan he carried cotton stuffs, tobacco, and copper ware to Yezd, where he remained some time, until a caravan was collected for Meshed, when he loaded his mules with the manufactures of the former city. Ali Kâtir agreed that Dervish Sefer and I should return with him to Tehran, and that whenever we were tired with walking, he would willingly assist us, by permitting us to mount his mules.

CHAPTER XIII

HAJJI BABA LEAVES MESHED, IS CURED OF HIS SPRAIN,
AND RELATES A STORY

WHEN I had cleared the gate which leads out of Meshed to Tehran, I shook the collar of my coat, and exclaimed to myself: 'May Heaven send thee misfortunes!' for had I been heard by any one of the pilgrims, who were now on their return—it very probably would have gone ill with me. My companion, Dervish Sefer, whom I knew to be of my mind, entered into my feelings, and we both vented our spleen against the inhabitants of that place; I for the drubbings which had been inflicted upon me, he for the persecutions he had undergone from the mollahs.

'As for you, my friend,' said he to me, 'you are young; you have much to suffer before you gain the experience necessary to carry you through life: do not repine at the first beating; it will probably save you many more, and will teach you another time to discover a Mohtesib, although hid under a woman's veil; but (taking hold of his beard) for a man of my age, one who has seen so much of the world, to be obliged to set out upon his travels again, is truly a great misfortune.'

'But it would have been easy for you,' said I, 'to remain at Meshed, if you had chosen it: had you been regular in your prayers and ablutions, you might have bid defiance to the mollahs.'

'That is true enough,' said the Dervish; 'but the fact is, that the festival of the Ramazan is now close at hand, when I should have been more closely watched than ever by them; and as I cannot and will not fast (smoking being as necessary to me as air, and wine as daily bread) I have thought it better to make a journey during that time, for the sake of the indulgence

which is permitted to travellers. I might perhaps have deceived them, as I have frequently done before, by eating and smoking in secret; but one so notorious as I, who lives by the supposed sanctity of his character, being narrowly watched, cannot take such liberties.'

We arrived at Semnan without the occurrence of anything remarkable, excepting, that a day or two before we reached it, when I was helping my friend Ali Kâtir to load one of his mules, I sprained my back again in its old place; the pain was so great that it became impossible for me to proceed with the caravan, and I determined to remain where I was until I had been relieved: particularly, as all danger from the Turcomans having passed, it was needless to make myself any longer a dependant upon a caravan. Dervish Sefer, who was anxious to get to the wine and pleasures of the capital, continued his journey.

I took up my abode in a tomb on the skirts of the town; and having spread my goat's skin in a corner of it, I proclaimed my arrival, according to the custom adopted by travelling dervishes, by blowing my horn, and making my exclamations of *Hak, Hú, Allah Akbar*, in a most sonorous and audible manner. I had allowed my person to acquire a wild and extravagant appearance, and flattered myself that I did credit to the instructions which had been given me in the arts of deception.

I was visited by several women, for whom I wrote talismans, and they repaid me by small presents of fruit, milk, honey, and other trifles. My back became so painful, that I was obliged to inquire if no one at Semnan could afford me relief. The barber and the farrier were the only two supposed to possess any medical talents; the one skilled in bleeding, drawing teeth, and setting a limb; the other, from his knowledge in the diseases of horses, being often consulted in human ailments. There was also a *gís sefid*, or grey wig, an old woman of a hag-like and decrepit appearance, who was looked up to as an oracle in all cases where the knowledge of the barber and farrier was of no avail, and who had besides a great many nostrums and receipts for all sorts of aches. Each came to me

in succession : all were agreed that my disorder proceeded from cold ; and as fire was the hottest thing in opposition to cold that they knew of, they as unanimously agreed that the actual cautery should immediately be applied to the part ; and the farrier, on account of his dealings in hot and cold iron, was appointed operator. He accordingly brought a pan of charcoal, a pair of bellows, and some small skewers ; and seating himself in a corner, made his fire, and heated his skewers ; when they were red-hot, I was placed on the ground flat on my face, and then, with great solemnity, my back was seared with the burning iron, whilst all the bystanders at every touch exclaimed, with great earnestness, '*Khoda shefa midehed,*' God gives relief. My medical attendants, in their united wisdom, out of compliment to the Prophet and the twelve Imâms, marked me in thirteen different places ; and although, when I had endured half the operation, I began to cry out most lustily with the pain, still I was not let off until the whole was gone through. It was long before the wounds which they had inflicted were cured ; and as they never would heal unless I was kept in perfect quiet, I confined myself to my cell for a considerable time ; at the end of which, my sprain had entirely taken its leave, and strength was restored to my whole frame. Of course, my recovery was attributed to the thirteen worthies, who had presided over the operation, and all the town became more than ever persuaded of the efficacy of hot iron ; but I could not but think that long repose had been my best doctor—an opinion which I took care to keep to myself ; for I had no objection that the world should believe that I was a protégé of so many holy personages.

I now determined to pursue my journey to Tehran ; but before I ventured to produce myself as a dervish upon that stage, I resolved to try my talent in relating a story before a Semnan audience. Accordingly, I went to a small open space, that is situated near the entrance of the bazaars, where most of the idlers of the town flock about noon ; and making the sort of exclamations usual upon such occasions, I soon collected a crowd, who settled themselves on the ground, round the place which

I had fixed upon for my theatre. A short story, touching a barber at Bagdad (which I had heard when I was myself in that profession), luckily came into my memory ; and, standing in the middle of a circle of louts with uplifted eyes and open mouths, I made my *début* in the following words :—

‘In the reign of the Caliph Haroun al Rashid, of happy memory, lived in the city of Bagdad a celebrated barber, of the name of Ali Sakal. He was so famous for a steady hand, and dexterity in his profession, that he could shave a head, and trim a beard and whiskers, with his eyes blindfolded, without once drawing blood. There was not a man of any fashion at Bagdad who did not employ him ; and such a run of business had he, that at length he became proud and insolent, and would scarcely ever touch a head, whose master was not a Beg or an Aga. Wood for fuel was always scarce and dear at Bagdad ; and as his shop consumed a great deal, the wood-cutters brought their loads to him in preference, almost sure of meeting with a ready sale. It happened one day, that a poor wood-cutter, new in his profession, and ignorant of the character of Ali Sakal, went to his shop, and offered him for sale a load of wood, which he had just brought from a considerable distance in the country, on his ass. Ali immediately offered him a price, making use of these words, “for all the wood that was upon the ass.” The wood-cutter agreed, unloaded his beast, and asked for the money. “You have not given me all the wood yet,” said the barber ; “I must have the pack-saddle (which is chiefly made of wood) into the bargain ; that was our agreement.” “How!” said the other, in great amazement—“who ever heard of such a bargain?—it is impossible.” In short, after many words and much altercation, the overbearing barber seized the pack-saddle, wood and all, and sent away the poor peasant in great distress. He immediately ran to the *cadi*, and stated his griefs : the *cadi* was one of the barber’s customers, and refused to hear the case. The wood-cutter applied to a higher judge : he also patronised Ali Sakal, and made light of the complaint. The poor man then appealed to the *múfti* himself ; who, having pondered over the question, whilst he sipped half a dozen cups

of coffee, and smoked as many pipes, at length settled that it was too difficult a case for him to decide, no provision being made for it in the Koran, and therefore he must put up with his loss. The wood-cutter was not disheartened; but forthwith got a scribe to write a petition to the caliph in person, which he duly presented on Friday, the day when he went in state to the mosque. The caliph's punctuality in reading petitions is well known, and it was not long before the wood-cutter was called to his presence. When he had approached the caliph, he kneeled and kissed the ground, and then placing his arms straight before him, his hands covered with the sleeves of his cloak, and his feet close together, he awaited the decision of his case. "Friend," said the caliph, "the barber has words on his side—you have equity on yours. The law must be defined by words, and agreements must be made by words; the former must have its course, or it is nothing; and agreements must be kept, or there would be no faith between man and man; therefore the barber must keep all his wood; but——" Then calling the wood-cutter close to him, the caliph whispered something in his ear, which none but he could hear, and then sent him away quite satisfied.'

Here then I made a pause in my narrative, and said (whilst I extended a small tin cup which I held in my hand): 'Now, my noble audience, if you will give me something, I will tell you what the caliph said to the wood-cutter.' I had excited great curiosity, and there was scarcely one of my hearers who did not give me a piece of money.

'Well, then,' said I, 'the caliph whispered to the wood-cutter what he was to do, in order to get satisfaction from the barber and what that was I will now relate. The wood-cutter having made his obeisances, returned to his ass, which was tied without, took it by the halter, and proceeded to his home. A few days after, he applied to the barber, as if nothing had happened between them, requesting that he, and a companion of his from the country, might enjoy the dexterity of his hand; and the price at which both operations were to be performed was settled. When the wood-cutter's crown had been properly

shorn, Ali Sakal asked where his companion was. "He is just standing without here," said the other, "and he shall come in presently." Accordingly he went out, and returned, leading his ass after him by the halter. "This is my companion," said he, "and you must shave him." "Shave him!" exclaimed the barber, in the greatest surprise; "it is enough that I have consented to demean myself by touching you, and do you insult me by asking me to do as much to your ass? Away with you, or I'll send you both to Jehanum;" and forthwith drove them out of the shop.

'The wood-cutter immediately went to the caliph, was admitted to his presence, and related his case. "'Tis well," said the commander of the faithful: "bring Ali Sakal and his razors to me this instant," he exclaimed to one of his officers; and in the course of ten minutes the barber stood before him. "Why do you refuse to shave this man's companion?" said the caliph to the barber: "was not that your agreement?" Ali, kissing the ground, answered: "'Tis true, O caliph, that such was our agreement; but who ever made a companion of an ass before? or who ever before thought of treating it like a true believer?" "You may say right," said the Caliph: "but, at the same time, who ever thought of insisting upon a pack-saddle being included in a load of wood? No, no, it is the wood-cutter's turn now. To the ass immediately, or you know the consequences." The barber was then obliged to prepare a great quantity of soap, to lather the beast from head to foot, and to shave him in the presence of the caliph and of the whole court, whilst he was jeered and mocked by the taunts and laughing of the bystanders. The poor wood-cutter was then dismissed with an appropriate present of money, and all Bagdad resounded with the story, and celebrated the justice of the commander of the faithful.'

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE MAN HE MEETS, AND OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF
THE ENCOUNTER

I LEFT Semnan with a light heart—my sprain was cured—I was young and handsome—twenty tomauns, my savings at Meshed, clinked in my purse—I had acquired some experience in the world ; and I determined, as soon as I reached Tehran, to quit the garb of a dervish, to dress myself well from head to foot, and to endeavour to push my fortunes in some higher walk in life.

About a day's journey from Tehran, as I was walking onward, chanting, with all my throat, a song on the loves of Leilah and Majnoun, I was overtaken by a courier, who entered into conversation with me, and invited me to partake of some victuals which he had brought with him. The heat of the day being overpowering, I willingly accepted this invitation. We settled ourselves on the borders of a rivulet, near a corn-field, whilst the courier took off his horse's bridle, and permitted it to feed on the new wheat. He then groped up, from the deep folds of his riding trousers, a pocket handkerchief, in which were wrapped several lumps of cold boiled rice, and three or four flaps of bread, which he spread before us, and then added some sour curds, which he poured from a small bag that hung at his saddle-bow. From the same trousers, which contained his shoes, a provision of tobacco, a drinking cup, and many other useful articles, he drew half a dozen raw onions, which he added to the feast ; and we ate with such appetite that very soon we were reduced to the melancholy dessert of sucking our fingers. We washed the whole down with some water from the rivulet, and only then (such had been our voracity) we thought of

questioning each other concerning the object of our respective journeys. From my dress, he perceived me to be a dervish, and my story was soon told : as for himself, he was a courier belonging to the governor of Asterabad, and, to my joy and surprise, was carrying the happy intelligence of the release of my former companion, Asker Khan, the Shah's poet, from his captivity among the Turcomans. I did not let the courier know how much I was interested in his errand, for experience had taught me how wise it was, in the affairs of life, to keep one's own counsel ; and, therefore, I pretended ignorance of even the existence of such a person.

My companion informed me that the poet had managed to reach Asterabad in safety, and that, being destitute of everything, he, in the meanwhile, had been despatched to give intelligence of his situation to his family. He showed me the letters with which he was intrusted, which he drew forth from his breast, wrapped up in a handkerchief ; and being a very inquisitive fellow, though unable to read, he was happy to find in me one who might give him some account of their contents. The first which I inspected was a memorial from the poet to the King of Kings, in which he set forth, in language the most poetic, all the miseries and tortures which he had endured since he had been thrown into the hands of the Turcomans : that the hunger, the thirst, and the barbarous treatment which he had experienced were nothing when compared with the privation of the all-gracious and refulgent presence of that pearl of royalty, that gem of magnificence, the quintessence of all earthly perfection, the great King of Kings ! that as the vilest reptile that crawls is permitted to enjoy the warmth of the glorious sun, so he, the meanest of the king's subjects, hoped once more to bask in the sunshine of the royal countenance ; and, finally, he humbly prayed, that his long absence might not deprive him of the shadow of the throne ; that he might aspire to re-occupy his former post near his majesty's person, and once again be permitted to vie with the nightingale, and sing of the charms and perfections of his lovely rose.

The next letter was addressed to the prime vizier, in which

that notorious minister, decrepit in person, and nefarious in conduct, was called a planet among the stars, and the sheet-anchor of the state, and in which the poet sues for his protection. There was nearly a similar one to his former enemy, the lord high treasurer. I then inspected the letters addressed to his family, of which one was to his wife, another to his son's tutor, and a third to his steward. To his wife, he talked of the interior arrangements of his *anderûn*; hoped that she had been economical in her dress, that she had kept the female slaves in good order, and desired her immediately to set herself and them about making clothes for him, as he was destitute of everything.

To the tutor, he enjoined great attention to his son's manners; hoped that he had been taught all the best forms of cant and compliment; that he never omitted to say his prayers; that he was by this time able to sit a horse, to perform the spear exercise, and to fire a gun on the full gallop.

To his steward, he gave some general instructions concerning the administration of his affairs—enjoined great economy;—that he should daily go and stand before the prime vizier; praise him to the skies; and make all sorts of professions, on his part, to his excellency; that he should keep a good watch upon his women and slaves; that his wife should not go too often to the bath; that when she and her slaves went abroad to take the air, he should accompany them. He hoped that no intriguing old woman, particularly Jewesses, had been admitted into his harem; and that the walls which surrounded the women's apartments had always been kept in good repair, in order to prevent gadding on the house-top with the neighbours. He ordered that his black slave, Johur, was now no longer to be allowed free access into the *anderûn*; and if ever seen to be familiar with any of the female slaves, he and they were to be whipped: finally, he desired the steward to give the courier a handsome reward, for being the bearer of such good news to his family.

I folded up the letters again;—those which had been

sealed,¹ I again sealed and returned to the courier. He seemed to reckon a great deal upon the reward that he was to get for bringing the first intelligence of the poet's safety, and told me that, fearing some other might get the start of him, he had travelled day and night; and added, that the horse which he now bestrode belonged to a peasant, from whom he had taken it forcibly on the road, having left his own, which was knocked up, to be brought on after him.

After we had conversed a little more, he seemed entirely overpowered by fatigue, and fell into a profound sleep. As he lay extended on the grass, I looked upon him, and I began to reflect how easy it would be to forestall him. I knew the whole of the poet's history;—in fact, I was in some measure identified with it. I began to think that I had a right to the first relation of it. Then as to the horse, it was as much mine as his; particularly since the peasant, with his own, must now be close at hand:—so, without more ceremony, I unfolded the handkerchief, which still lay in his lap, and taking out the letter to the steward, I mounted the horse: I applied the stirrups² to his sides; I galloped off; and in a very short time had left the sleeper far behind me, and had made considerable progress on the road to the capital.

As I rode along, I considered what was now my best line of conduct, and in what manner I should best introduce myself to the poet's family, so as to make my story good, and secure for myself the reward which had been destined for the courier. I calculated that I should have at least a good day's start of him; for when he awoke, he probably would be obliged to walk some distance before he got another horse, should he not regain his own, which was very doubtful; and appearing on foot as he did, it would be a hundred to one if anybody would believe his story,

¹ A Persian letter is folded up like a lady's thread-paper, and fastened in the middle by a slip of adhesive paper, which is moistened with the tongue, and then stamped with the seal of the writer. Thus, letters are frequently opened and reclosed without detection.

² The stirrup, which is a sort of iron shovel, sharp at the edge, in Persia as well as in Turkey, is used by way of spur.

and he, most probably, would now be refused the loan of a beast to carry him on. I resolved, therefore, immediately upon reaching Tehran, to sell the horse, and its accoutrements, for what they would fetch ; I would then exchange my dervish's dress for the common dress of the country ; and making myself up as one come from off a long journey, present myself at the gate of the poet's house, and there make the best story I could, which would be a sufficiently easy matter, considering how well I was acquainted with every circumstance relating to him.

CHAPTER XV

HAJJI BABA REACHES TEHRAN, AND GOES TO THE POET'S HOUSE

I ENTERED Tehran early in the morning by the Shah Abdul Azim gate, just as it was opened, and immediately exhibited my horse for sale at the market, which is daily held there, for that purpose. I had proved it to be a good beast, from the rate at which I had travelled since taking my hasty leave of the courier; but a horse-dealer, to whom I showed it, made out so clearly that it was full of defects, that I thought myself in luck, if I got anything at all for it. It was chup,¹—it had the ableh—it was old, and its teeth had been burnt;—in short, it seemed to have every quality that a horse ought not to have. I was therefore surprised when he offered me five tomauns for it, provided I threw him the bridle and saddle into the bargain; and he seemed as surprised when I took him at his word, and accepted of his offer. He paid me down one half of the money, and then offered me a half-starved ass in payment of the remainder; but this I refused, and he promised to pay me in full when we met again. I was too much in haste to continue bargaining any longer; so, going straightway to the bazaar, I bought a black cap, laid by my dervish's tiara, and having equipped myself in a manner to be taken for one come from off a journey, I inquired my way to the house of the poet.

It was situated in a pleasant quarter of the town, surrounded by gardens filled with poplars and pomegranate trees, and in a street through which ran a stream of water, bordered by

¹ The Persians have a particular aversion to horses which have white legs on one side, which they call chup; and they also very much undervalue a horse that has the ableh, which consists of white leprous marks on its nose, round the eyes, and under the tail.

beautiful chenars.¹ But the house itself seemed indeed to speak the absence of its master: the gate was half closed; there was no stir about it; and when I entered the first court, I could perceive but few indications of an inhabitant. This looked ill for my promised reward. At length, making my way to the upper room, that was situated over the gate, I there saw a man of about fifty years old, seated on a felt carpet, smoking his water-pipe, whom I found to be the very person I was in search of, viz., the Nazir or steward.

I immediately exclaimed, 'Good news! the khan is coming.'

'*Yani cheh?* what do you mean?' said he; 'which khan? where? when?'

When I had explained myself, and had presented the letter addressed to him, he seemed to be thrown into a mixed state of feigned joy and real sorrow, amazement, and apprehension.

'But are you very sure,' said he, 'that the khan is alive?'

'Very sure,' returned I; 'and before to-morrow is over, you will receive another courier, who will give you many more particulars of his safety, and who will bring letters to the king, viziers, and others.'

He then began to make all sorts of incoherent exclamations: 'This is a wonderful business! What dust has fallen upon our heads!—Where shall I go?—What shall I do?'

When he had a little recovered himself, I endeavoured to persuade him to give me an explanation of his emotions on this occasion, and tell me why he felt so agitated, and apparently distressed, at what ought only to be a matter of joy. All I could hear from him was, 'He must be dead; everybody says he is dead; his wife dreamt that she had lost her largest tooth, the one that gave her such aching pain, and therefore he is dead: besides, the king has settled it so. He cannot be alive; he must not be alive.'

'Well,' said I, 'if he is dead, be it so; all I can say is, that he was one of the true believers at Asterabad, not six days ago; and that he will soon prove in person, by showing himself at Tehran, in the course of another week.'

¹ The chenar-tree is a species of sycamore.

After the Nazir had sat and wondered, and ruminated for some time, he said, 'You will not be surprised at my perplexity when I tell you of the state of things here, in consequence of the report of my master's death. In the first place, the Shah had seized all his property : his house, furniture, and live stock, including his Georgian slaves, are to be given to Khur Ali Mirza, one of the king's younger sons : his village now belongs to the prime vizier : his place is about to be bestowed upon Mirza Fûzûl ; and, to crown all, his wife has married his son's tutor. Say, then, whether or no I have not a right to be astonished and perplexed ?'

I agreed that there was no disputing his right ; 'but, in the meanwhile,' said I, 'what becomes of my reward ?'

'Oh, as for that,' answered the Nazir, 'you cannot expect anything from me ; for you have brought me no joyful tidings : you may claim it from my master, when he comes, if you choose, but I can give you nothing.'

Upon which, promising to return on some future day, I left the Nazir to his own reflections, and quitted the house.

CHAPTER XVI

HE MAKES PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, AND IS INVOLVED IN A
QUARREL

I DETERMINED to wait the arrival of the poet, and through his interference to endeavour to get into some situation, where I might gain my bread honestly, and acquire a chance of advancing myself in life, without having recourse to the tricks and frauds which I had hitherto practised: for I was tired of herding with the low and the vulgar; and I saw so many instances before me of men rising in the world, and acquiring both riches and honour, who had sprung from an origin quite as obscure as my own, that I already anticipated my elevation, and even settled in my own mind how I should act when I was a prime vizier.

'Who,' said I to myself, 'was the Shah's chief favourite, Ismael Beg tellai, or the golden, but a ferash, or a tent-pitcher? He is neither handsomer nor better spoken than I; and if ever there should be an opportunity of comparing our horsemanship, I think one who has been brought up amongst the Turcomans would show him what riding is, in spite of his reputation. Well; and the famous lord high treasurer, who fills the king's coffers with gold, and who does not forget his own—who and what was he? A barber's son is quite as good as a green-grocer's, and, in our respective cases, a great deal better too; for I can read and write, whereas his excellency, as report says, can do neither. He eats and drinks what he likes; he puts on a new coat every day; and, after the Shah, has the choice of all the beauties of Persia; and all this without half my sense, or half my abilities: for to hear the world talk, one must believe him to be little better than a *khúr be teshdeed*, i.e. a doubly accented ass.

I continued wrapt up in these sort of meditations, seated with my back against the wall of one of the crowded avenues which lead to the gate of the royal palace, and had so worked up my imagination by the prospect of my future greatness, that on rising to walk away, I instinctively pushed the crowd from before me, as if such respect from them was due to one of my lofty pretensions. Some stared at me, some abused me, and others took me for a madman; and indeed when I came to myself, and looked at my tattered clothes and my beggarly appearance, I could not help smiling at their surprise, and at my folly; and straightway went into the cloth bazaar in the determination of fitting myself out in decent apparel, as the first step towards my change of life.

Making my way through the crowd, I was stopped by a violent quarrel between three men, who were abusing each other with more than ordinary violence. I pushed into the circle which surrounded them, and there, to my dismay, discovered the courier, whom I had deceived, seconded by a peasant, attacking the horse-dealer, whom they had just pulled off the horse which I had sold him.

‘That is my horse,’ said the peasant.

‘That is my saddle,’ said the courier.

‘They are mine,’ exclaimed the horse-dealer.

I immediately saw the danger in which I stood, and was about to slink away, when I was perceived by the horse-dealer, who seized hold of my girdle, and said, ‘This is the man I bought the horse of.’ As soon as I was recognised by the courier, immediately the whole brunt of the quarrel, like a thunder-cloud, burst on my head, and I was almost overwhelmed by its violence. Rascal, thief, cheat, were epithets which were dinned into my ears without mercy.

‘Where’s my horse?’ cried one. ‘Give me my saddle,’ vociferated the other. ‘Return me my money,’ roared out a third. ‘Take him to the *cadi*,’ said the crowd.

In vain I bawled, swore, and bade defiance; in vain I was all smoothness and conciliation: it was impossible for the first ten minutes to gain a hearing: every one recited his griefs. The

courier's rage was almost ungovernable; the peasant complained of the injustice which had been done him; and the horse-dealer called me every sort of name, for having robbed him of his money. I first talked to the one, then coaxed the other, and endeavoured to bully the third. To the courier I said, 'Why are you so angry? there is your saddle safe and sound, you can ask no more.' To the peasant I exclaimed, 'You could not say more if your beast had actually been killed; take him and walk away, and return thanks to Allah that it is no worse.' As for the horse-dealer, I inveighed against him with all the bitterness of a man who had been cheated of his property: 'You have a right to talk indeed of having been deceived, when to this moment you know that you have only paid me one half of the cost of the horse, and that you wanted to fob me off with a dying ass for the other half.'

I offered to return him the money; but this he refused: he insisted upon my paying him the keep of the horse besides: upon which a new quarrel ensued, in which arguments were used on both sides which convinced neither party, and consequently we immediately adjourned to the daroga or police magistrate, who, we agreed, should decide the question between us.

We found him at his post, at the cross streets in the bazaar, surrounded by his officers, who, with their long sticks, were in readiness to inflict the bastinado on the first offender. I opened the case, and stated all the circumstances of it; insisting very strongly on the evident intention to cheat me which the horse-dealer had exhibited. The horse-dealer answered me, and showed that as the horse did not belong to him, it being stolen from another, he had no right to pay for its keep.

The question puzzled the daroga so much, that he declined interfering, and was about ordering us to the tribunal of the *cadi*, when a decrepit old man, a bystander, said, 'Why do you make so much difficulty about a plain question?—when the horse-dealer shall have paid the Hajjî the remaining half of the price of the horse, then the Hajjî shall pay for the keep of the beast, as long as it was in the horse-dealer's possession.'

Every one cried *Barik Allah! Barik Allah!* Praise be to God! and whether right or wrong, they all appeared so struck by the specious justice of the decision, that the daroga dismissed us, and told us to depart in peace.

I did not lose a moment in repaying to the horse-dealer the purchase-money of the horse, and in getting from him a receipt in full: it was only after he had settled with me that he began to ponder over the merits of the decision, and seemed extremely puzzled to discover why, if he was entitled to the horse's keep at all, he was not entitled to it, whether he had paid me half or the whole of the money. He seemed to think that he for once had been duped; and very luckily his rage was averted from me to the daroga, whom he very freely accused of being a puzzle-headed fool, and one who had no more pretension to law than *he* had to honesty.

CHAPTER XVII

HE PUTS ON NEW CLOTHES, GOES TO THE BATH, AND APPEARS
IN A NEW CHARACTER

I now looked upon myself as clear of this unpleasant business, which I had entirely brought on my own head, and congratulated myself that I had got off at so cheap a rate. I again made my way to the cloth bazaar, and going to the first shop near the gate of it, I inquired the price of red cloth, of which it was my ambition to make a *barûni*, or cloak; because I thought that it would give that respectability to my appearance which I always felt for those who wore it. The shop-keeper, upon looking at me from head to foot, said, 'A *barûni* indeed! and for whom do you want it, and who is to pay for it?'

'For myself, to be sure,' answered I.

'And what does such a poor devil as you want with such a coat?' said he: 'Mirzas and Khans only wear them, and I am sure you are no such personage.'

I was about to answer in great wrath, when a *dalal* or broker went by, loaded with all sorts of second-hand clothes, which he was hawking about for sale, and to him I immediately made application, in spite of the reiterated calls of the shop-keeper, who now too late repented of having driven me off in so hasty a manner. We retreated to a corner in the gateway of the adjacent mosque, and there the *dalal*, putting his load down, spread his merchandise before me. I was struck by a fine shot silk vest, trimmed in front with gold lace and gold buttons, of which I asked the price. The *dalal* extolled its beauty and my taste; swore that it had belonged to one of the king's favourite Georgians, who had only worn it twice, and having made me try it on, walked around and around me, exclaiming all the

while, '*Mashallah, Mashallah!*' Praise be to God! I was so pleased with this, that I must needs have a shawl for my waist to match, and he produced an old Cashmerian shawl full of holes and darns, which he assured me had belonged to one of the ladies in the king's harem, and which, he said, he would let me have at a reasonable price. My vanity made me prefer this commodity to a new Kermân shawl, which I might have had for what I was about to pay for the old worn-out Cashmere, and adjusting it so as to hide the defects, I wound it about my waist, which only wanted a dagger stuck into it, to make my dress complete. With this the dalal also supplied me, and when I was thus equipped I could not resist expressing my satisfaction to the broker, who was not backward in assuring me, that there was not a handsomer nor better-dressed man in Tehran.

When we came to settle our accounts, the business wore a more serious aspect. The dalal began by assuring me of his honesty, that he was not like other dalals, who asked a hundred and then took fifty, and that when he said a thing, I might depend upon its veracity. He then asked me five tomauns for the coat, fifteen for the shawl, and four for the dagger, making altogether twenty-four tomauns.

Upon hearing this, my delight subsided, for I had barely twenty tomauns in my pocket, and I was about stripping myself of my finery, and returning again to my old clothes, when the dalal stopped me, and said, 'You may perhaps think that price a little too much, but, by my head and by your soul, I bought them for that—tell me what you will give? I answered, that it was out of the question dealing with him upon such high terms, but that if he would give them to me for five tomauns I would be a purchaser. This he rejected with disdain, upon which I stripped, and returned him his property. When he had collected his things again, and apparently when all dealings between us were at an end, he said, 'I feel a friendship for you, and I will do for you what I would not do for my brother—you shall have them for ten tomauns.' I again refused, and we stood higgling, until we agreed that I should pay him six, and

one by way of a dress for himself. This was no sooner said than done.

He then left me, and I packed up my bargain, with the intention of first going to the bath, and there equipping myself. On my road I bought a pair of high-heeled green slippers, a blue silk shirt, and a pair of crimson silk trousers, and having tied up the whole in my handkerchief, I proceeded to the bath.

No one took notice of me as I entered, for one of my mean appearance could create no sensation, and I comforted myself by the reflection that the case would be changed as soon as I should put on my new clothes. I deposited my bundle in a corner, where I also undressed, and having wrapt myself round with a towel, I entered the bath.

Here all ranks were on a level, in appearance at least, and I now flattered myself that my fine form, my broad chest, and narrow waist, would make me an object of admiration. I called to one of the dalâks (bathing men) to wait upon me, and to go through the different operations of rubbing with the hand, and of the friction with the hair bag, and I also ordered him to shave my head, to get ready the necessary materials for dyeing my beard, moustaches, and curls, as well as my hands and the soles of my feet, and also to prepare the depilatory ; in short, I announced my intention of undergoing a complete lustration.

The dalâk, as soon as he began rubbing me, expressed his admiration at my broad chest by his repeated exclamations ; and bearing in mind the influence which new clothes were likely to create, I behaved like one who had been accustomed to this sort of praise and attention. He said that I could not have come at a luckier hour, for that he had just operated upon a Khan, who having received a dress of honour from the Shah, upon the occasion of bringing the first melons from Ispahan, had been sent to the bath by the astrologers at this particular time, as the most fortunate for putting on a new dress.

As soon as all was over, the dalâk brought me some dry linen, and conducted me to the spot where I had left my clothes. With what pleasure I opened my bundle and inspected

my finery! It appeared that I was renovated in proportion as I put on each article of dress. I had never yet been clothed in silk. I tied on my trousers with the air of a man of fashion, and when I heard the rustling of my vest, I turned about in exultation to see who might be looking at me. My shawl was wound about me in the newest style, rather falling in front, and spread out large behind, and when the dagger glittered in my girdle, I conceived that nothing could exceed the finish of my whole adjustment. I indented the top of my cap in the true Kajari or royal style, and placed it on my head considerably on one side. When the bathing men at length brought me the looking-glass, as a signal for paying the bath, I detained him for the purpose of surveying myself, arranging my curls to twist up behind the ear, and pulling my moustaches up towards my eyes. I then paid him handsomely, and leaving my old clothes under his charge, I made my exit with the strut of a man of consequence.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE POET RETURNS FROM CAPTIVITY—THE CONSEQUENCES OF IT
FOR HAJJÍ BABA

I TOOK my road towards the poet's house, in the hope of gaining some intelligence about him. From the head of the street, I perceived a crowd surrounding the gate, and I was soon informed that he had just arrived, and had gone through the ceremony of making his entrance over the roof instead of through the door: for such is the custom when a man who has been thought dead returns home alive.

I immediately pushed through the crowd, made my way into the room where the poet was seated, and with every demonstration of great joy, congratulated him upon his safe arrival. He did not recognise me, and even when I had explained who I was, he could scarcely believe that one so trim and smart as I then was could be the same dirty ragged ruffian whom he had known before.

The apartment was filled with all sorts of people, some happy at his return, others full of disappointment. Among the latter, and those who paid him the finest compliments, was Mirza Fúzúl, the man who had been nominated to succeed him in his situation, and who did not cease exclaiming, 'Your place has been empty, and our eyes are enlightened,' as long as he remained in the room. At length, a great bustle was heard, the doors were opened, and an officer from the king was announced, who commanded the poet forthwith to repair to the presence, which he did in the very clothes, boots, dust, and all, in which he had travelled.

The party then broke up, and I left the house in the determination of returning the next day; but as I was going

out of the yard, I met the Nazir, with whom I had had a conversation as before related. He did not appear to me to be among the happy ones. 'In the name of Allah,' said I, 'you see that my words have proved true: the Khan is alive!' 'True enough,' answered he, with a sigh; 'he is alive; and may his life be a long one! but God is great!' and then making two or three more similar exclamations, he left me, apparently full of care and misery.

I passed the remainder of the day in strolling about, and building castles in the air. I walked through the bazaars, went to the mosques, and lounged among the idlers, who are always to be found in great numbers about the gate of the royal palace. Here, the news of the day was the poet's return, and the reception which he had met with from the Shah. Some said, that his majesty, upon hearing of his arrival, had ordained that it could not be; that he was dead, and must be so. Others, that, on the contrary, the king was happy at the intelligence, and had ordered ten tomauns to be given to the bearer of it. The truth, however, was this: the king had been disappointed at the poet's resurrection, because it destroyed the arrangements he had made with respect to his house and effects, and he was not disposed to give him a good reception; but Asker, who well knew his majesty's passion for poetry, and particularly of that kind which sings the royal praises, had long since foreseen the event, and had provided himself with an impromptu, which he had composed even when he was living an exile among the Turcomans. This he repeated at the proper moment; and thus the tide of the king's favour, which was running full against him, he entirely turned, and made it flow to his advantage. In short, he had his mouth filled with gold for his pains, was invested with a magnificent dress, and was reinstated in his situation and his possessions.

I lost no time in again congratulating my adopted patron, and did not miss a single morning in attending his levee. Finding that he was favourably inclined towards me, I made known to him my situation, and entreated him either to give me a place in his household, or to recommend me as a servant

to one of his acquaintance. I had found out that the Nazir's despondency at his master's return proceeded from the fear of being detected in certain frauds which he had committed on his property ; and, as I hoped that I might eventually succeed to his situation, I expressed the greatest zeal for the poet's interest, and disclosed all that I knew concerning the delinquency of his servant. However, I did not succeed ; for whether he had a clearer insight into characters than I gave him credit for, or whether the Nazir managed to prove his innocence, and make me suspected, I know not ; but the fact was, that he kept his place, and I continued to be an attendant at the levees.

At length, one morning Asker called me to him, and said, 'Hajji, my friend, you know how thankful I have always expressed myself for your kindness to me when we were prisoners together in the hands of the Turcomans, and now I will prove my gratitude. I have recommended you strongly to Mirza Ahmak, the king's Hakîm Bashi, or chief physician, who is in want of a servant ; and I make no doubt, that if you give him satisfaction, he will teach you his art, and put you in the way of making your fortune. You have only to present yourself before him, saying that you come from me, and he will immediately assign you an employment.'

I had no turn for the practice of physic, and recollecting the story which had been related to me by the dervish, I held the profession in contempt : but my case was desperate ; I had spent my last dînar, and therefore I had nothing left me but to accept of the doctor's place. Accordingly, the next morning I proceeded to his house, which was situated in the neighbourhood of the palace ; and as I entered a dull, neglected courtyard, I there found several sick persons, some squatted against the wall, others supported by their friends, and others again with bottles in their hands, waiting the moment when the physician should leave the women's apartments to transact business in public. I proceeded to an open window, where those who were not privileged to enter the room stood, and there I took my station until I should be called in. Within the room were

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several persons who came to pay their court to the doctor (for every man who is an officer of the court has his levee), and from remarking them I learnt how necessary it was, in order to advance in life, to make much of everything, even the dog or the cat, if they came in my way, of him who can have access to the ear of men in power. I made my reflections upon the miseries I had already undergone, and was calculating how long it would take me to go through a course of cringing and flattery to be entitled to the same sorts of attention myself, when I perceived, by the bows of those near me, that the doctor had seated himself at the window, and that the business of the day had commenced.

The Hakím was an old man, with an eye sunk deep into his head, high cheek-bones, and a scanty beard. He had a considerable bend in his back, and his usual attitude, when seated, was that of a projecting chin, his head reclining back between his shoulders, and his hands resting on his girdle, whilst his elbows formed two triangles on each side of his body. He made short snappish questions, gave little hums at the answers, and seemed to be thinking of anything but the subject before him. When he heard the account of the ailments of those who had come to consult him, and had said a few words to his little circle of parasites, he looked at me, and after I had told him that I was the person of whom the poet had spoken, he fixed his little sharp eyes upon me for a second or two, and then desired me to wait, for that he wished to speak to me in private. Accordingly, he soon after got up, and went out of the room, and I was called upon to attend him in a small separate court, closely walled on all sides except on the one where was situated the khelwet, or private room, in which the doctor was seated.

CHAPTER XIX

HAJJI BABA GETS INTO THE SERVICE OF THE KING'S PHYSICIAN—OF
THE MANNER HE WAS FIRST EMPLOYED BY HIM

As soon as I appeared, the doctor invited me into the room, and requested me to be seated; which I did with all the humility which it is the etiquette for an inferior to show towards his superior for so great an honour.

He informed me, that the poet had spoken very favourably of me, and had said that I was a person to be depended upon, particularly on account of my discretion and prudence; that I had seen a great deal of life; that I was fertile in expedients; and that if any business in which circumspection and secrecy were necessary was intrusted to me, I should conduct it with all the ability required. I bowed repeatedly as he spoke, and kept my hands respectfully before me, covered with the border of my sleeve, whilst I took care that my feet were also completely hid. He then continued, and said—'I have occasion for a person of your description precisely at this moment, and as I put great confidence in the recommendation of my friend Asker, it is my intention to make use of your good offices; and if you succeed according to my expectations, you may rest assured that it will be well for you, and that I shall not remain unmindful of your services.'

Then requesting me to approach nearer to him, and in a low and confidential tone of voice, he said, looking over his shoulders as if afraid of being overheard: 'Hajji, you must know that an ambassador from the Franks is lately arrived at this court, in whose suite there is a doctor. This infidel has already acquired considerable reputation here. He treats his patients in a manner quite new to us, and has arrived with a

chest full of medicines, of which we do not even know the names. He pretends to the knowledge of a great many things of which we have never yet heard in Persia. He makes no distinction between hot and cold diseases, and hot and cold remedies, as Galenus and Avicenna have ordained, but gives mercury by way of a cooling medicine; stabs the belly with a sharp instrument for wind in the stomach;¹ and, what is worse than all, pretends to do away with the small-pox altogether, by infusing into our nature a certain extract of cow, a discovery which one of their philosophers has lately made. Now this will never do, Hajji. The small-pox has always been a comfortable source of revenue to me; I cannot afford to lose it, because an infidel chooses to come here and treat us like cattle. We cannot allow him to take the bread out of our mouths. But the reason why I particularly want your help proceeds from the following cause. The grand vizier was taken ill, two days ago, of a strange uneasiness, after having eaten more than his usual quantity of raw lettuce and cucumber, steeped in vinegar and sugar. This came to the Frank ambassador's ears, who, in fact, was present at the eating of the lettuce, and he immediately sent his doctor to him, with a request that he might be permitted to administer relief. The grand vizier and the ambassador, it seems, had not been upon good terms for some time, because the latter was very urgent that some demand of a political nature might be conceded to him, which the vizier, out of consideration for the interests of Persia, was obliged to deny; and, therefore, thinking that this might be a good opportunity of conciliating the infidel, and of coming to a compromise, he agreed to accept of the doctor's services. Had I been apprised of the circumstance in time, I should easily have managed to put a stop to the proceeding; but the doctor did not lose an instant in administering his medicine, which, I hear, only consisted of one little white and tasteless pill. From all accounts, and as ill luck would have it, the effect it has produced is something quite marvellous. The grand vizier has

¹ This alludes to tapping in cases of dropsy; an operation unknown among the Persians, until our surgeons taught it them.

received such relief, that he can talk of nothing else ; he says, " that he felt the pill drawing the damp from the very tips of his fingers " ; and that now he has discovered in himself such newness of strength and energy, that he laughs at his old age, and even talks of making up the complement of wives permitted to him by our blessed Prophet. But the mischief has not stopped here ; the fame of this medicine, and of the Frank doctor, has gone throughout the court ; and the first thing which the king talked of at the selam (the audience) this morning, was of its miraculous properties. He called upon the grand vizier to repeat to him all that he had before said upon the subject ; and as he talked of the wonders that it had produced upon his person, a general murmur of applause and admiration was heard throughout the assembly. His majesty then turned to me, and requested me to explain the reason why such great effects should proceed from so small a cause, when I was obliged to answer, stooping as low as I could to hide my confusion, and kissing the earth—" I am your sacrifice : O king of kings, I have not yet seen the drug which the infidel doctor has given to your majesty's servant, the grand vizier ; but as soon as I have, I will inform your majesty of what it consists. In the meanwhile, your humble slave beseeches the Centre of the Universe to recollect, that the principal agent, on this occasion, must be an evil spirit, an enemy to the true faith, since he is an instrument in the hands of an infidel ; of one who calls our holy Prophet a cheat, and who disowns the all-powerful decrees of predestination."

‘ Having said this, in order to shake his growing reputation, I retired in deep cogitation how I might get at the secrets of the infidel, and particularly inquire into the nature of his prescription, which has performed such miracles ; and you are come most opportunely to my assistance. You must immediately become acquainted with him ; and I shall leave it to your address to pick his brain and worm his knowledge out of him ; but as I wish to procure a specimen of the very medicine which he administered to the grand vizier, being obliged to give an account of it to-morrow to the Shah, you

must begin your services to me by eating much of lettuce and raw cucumber, and of making yourself as sick to the full as his highness the vizier. You may then apply to the Frank, who will, doubtless, give you a duplicate of the celebrated pill, which you will deliver over to me.'

'But,' said I, who had rather taken fright at this extraordinary proposal, 'how shall I present myself before a man whom I do not know? Besides, such marvellous stories are related of the Europeans, that I should be puzzled in what manner to behave. Pray give me some instructions how to act.'

'Their manners and customs are totally different from ours, that is true,' replied Mirza Ahmak, 'and you may form some idea of them, when I tell you, that instead of shaving their heads, and letting their beards grow, as we do, they do the very contrary, for not a vestige of hair is to be seen on their chins, and their hair is as thick on their heads as if they had made a vow never to cut it off: then, they sit on little platforms, whilst we squat on the ground; they take up their food with claws made of iron, whilst we use our fingers; they are always walking about, we keep seated; they wear tight clothes, we loose ones; they write from left to right, we from right to left; they never pray, we five times a day; in short, there is no end to what might be related of them; but most certain it is, that they are the most filthy people on the earth, for they hold nothing to be unclean; they eat all sorts of animals, from a pig to a tortoise, without the least scruple, and that without first cutting their throats; they will dissect a dead body, without requiring any purification after it, and perform all the brute functions of their nature, without ever thinking it necessary to go to the hot bath, or even rubbing themselves with sand after them.'

'And is it true,' said I, 'that they are so irascible, that if perchance their word is doubted, and they are called liars, they will fight on such an occasion till they die?'

'That is also said of them,' answered the doctor; 'but the case has not happened to me yet; however, I must warn you

of one thing, which is, that if they happen to admire anything that you possess, you must not say to them, as you would to one of us, "It is a present to you, it is your property," lest they should take you at your word and keep it, which you know would be inconvenient, and not what you intended; but you must endeavour as much as possible to speak what you think, for that is what they like.'

'But then, if such is the case,' said I, 'do not you think that the Frank doctor will find me out with a lie in my mouth; pretending to be sick when I am well; asking medicine from him for myself, when I want it for another?'

'No, no,' said the Mirza; 'you are to be sick, really sick, you know, and then it will be no lie. Go, Hajji, my friend,' said he, putting his arm round my neck: 'go, eat your cucumbers immediately, and let me have the pill by this evening.' And then coaxing me, and preventing me from making any further objections to his unexpected request, he gently pushed me out of the room, and I left him, scarcely knowing whether to laugh or to cry at the new posture which my affairs had taken. To sicken without any stipulated reward was what I could not consent to do, so I retraced my steps with a determination of making a bargain with my patron; but, when I got to the room, he was no longer there, having apparently retreated into his harem; and, therefore, I was obliged to proceed on my errand.

CHAPTER XX

HE SUCCEEDS IN DECEIVING TWO OF THE FACULTY, GETTING A PILL FROM ONE, AND A PIECE OF GOLD FROM THE OTHER

I INQUIRED my way to the ambassador's house, and actually set off with the intention of putting the doctor's wishes into execution, and getting, if possible, a writhing disorder on the road; but, upon more mature reflection, I recollected that a stomach-ache was not a marketable commodity which might be purchased at a moment's notice; for although lettuce and cucumber might disagree with an old grand vizier, yet it was a hundred to one but they would find an easy digestion in a young person like me. However, I determined to obtain the pill by stratagem, if I could not procure it in a more direct manner. I considered that if I feigned to be ill, the doctor would very probably detect me, and turn me out of his house for a cheat, so I preferred the easier mode of passing myself off for one of the servants of the royal harem, and then making out some story by which I might attain my end. I accordingly stepped into one of the old clothes' shops in the bazaar, and hired a cloak for myself, such as the scribes wear; and then substituting a roll of paper in my girdle instead of a dagger, I flattered myself that I might pass for something more than a common servant.

I soon found out where the ambassador dwelt. Bearing in mind all that Mirza Ahmak had told me, I rather approached the door of the doctor's residence with fear and hesitation. I found the avenues to it crowded with poor women, bearing infants in their arms, who, I was told, came to receive the new-fashioned preservative against the small-pox. This, it was supposed for political reasons, the Franks were anxious to

promote ; and, as the doctor performed the operation gratis, he had no lack of patients, particularly of the poorer sort, who could not approach a Persian doctor without a present, or a good fee in their hand.

On entering, I found a man seated in the middle of the room, near an elevated wooden platform, upon which were piled boxes, books, and a variety of instruments and utensils, the uses of which were unknown to me. He was in dress and appearance the most extraordinary-looking infidel I had ever seen. His chin and upper lip were without the vestige of a hair upon them, as like an eunuch as possible. He kept his head most disrespectfully uncovered, and wore a tight bandage round his neck, with other contrivances on the sides of his cheeks, as if he were anxious to conceal some wound or disease. His clothes were fitted so tight to his body, and his outward coat in particular was cut off at such sharp angles, that it was evident cloth was a scarce and dear commodity in his country. The lower part of his dress was particularly improper, and he kept his boots on in his room, without any consideration for the carpet he was treading upon, which struck me as a custom subversive of all decorum.

I found that he talked our language ; for, as soon as he saw me, he asked me how I did, and then immediately remarked that it was a fine day, which was so self-evident a truth, that I immediately agreed to it. I then thought it necessary to make him some fine speeches, and flattered him to the best of my abilities, informing him of the great reputation he had already acquired in Persia ; that Locman¹ was a fool when compared to one of his wisdom ; and that as for his contemporaries, the Persian physicians, they were not fit to handle his pestle for him. To all this he said nothing. I then told him that the king himself, having heard of the wonderful effects of his medicine upon the person of his grand vizier, had ordered his historian to insert the circumstance in the annals of the empire,

¹ Locman is the most celebrated of the Eastern Sages, and is supposed by some to be the same as Æsop. The title usually given to a doctor in Persia is *Locman al zaman*, the Locman of his day.

as one of the most extraordinary events of his reign,—that a considerable sensation had been produced in his majesty's seraglio, for many of the ladies had immediately been taken ill, and were longing to make a trial of his skill,—that the king's favourite Georgian slave was, in fact, at this moment, in great pain,—that I had been deputed by the chief eunuch, owing to a special order from his majesty, to procure medicine similar to that which the first minister had taken,—and I concluded my speech by requesting the doctor immediately to furnish me with some.

He seemed to ponder over what I had told him; and, after reflecting a short time, said that it was not his custom to administer medicine to his patients without first seeing them, for by so doing he would probably do more harm than good; but that if he found that the slave was in want of his aid, he should be very happy to attend her.

I answered to this, that as to seeing the face of the Georgian slave, that was totally out of the question, for no man ever was allowed that liberty in Persia, excepting her husband. In cases of extreme necessity, perhaps a doctor might be permitted to feel a woman's pulse, but then it must be done when a veil covers the hand.

To which the Frank replied, 'In order to judge of my patient's case I must not only feel the pulse, but see the tongue also.'

'Looking at the tongue is totally new in Persia,' said I; 'and I am sure you could never be indulged with such a sight in the seraglio, without a special order from the king himself; an eunuch would rather cut out his own tongue first.'

'Well, then,' said the doctor, 'recollect, that if I deliver my medicine to you, I do so without taking any responsibility upon myself for its effects; for if it does not cure, it may perhaps kill.'

When I had assured him that no harm or prejudice could possibly accrue to him, he opened a large chest, which appeared to be full of drugs, and taking therefrom the smallest quantity of a certain white powder, he mixed it up, with some bread,

into the form of a pill, and putting it into paper gave it me, with proper directions how it should be administered. Seeing that he made no mystery of his knowledge, I began to question him upon the nature and properties of this particular medicine, and upon his practice in general. He answered me without any reserve; not like our Persian doctors, who only make a parade of fine words, and who adjust every ailment that comes before them to what they read in their Galen, their Hippocrates, and their Abou Avicenna.

When I had learned all I could, I left him with great demonstration of friendship and thankfulness, and immediately returned to Mirza Ahmak, who doubtless was waiting for me with great impatience. Having divested myself of my borrowed cloak and resumed my own dress, I appeared before him with a face made up for the occasion, for I wished to make him believe that the lettuce and cucumbers had done their duty. At every word I pretended to receive a violent twitch, and acted my part so true to life, that the stern and inflexible nature of Mirza Ahmak himself was moved into somewhat like pity for me.

'There! there,' said I, as I entered his apartment, 'in the name of Allah take your prize:' and then pretending to be bent double, I made the most horrid grimaces, and uttered deep groans: 'there! I have followed your orders, and now throw myself upon your generosity.' He endeavoured to take the object of his search from me, but I kept it fast; and whilst I gave him to understand that I expected prompt reward, I made indications of an intention to swallow it, unless he actually gave me something in hand. So fearful was he of not being able to answer the king's interrogatories concerning the pill, so anxious to get it into his possession, that he actually pressed a gold piece upon me. No lover could sue his mistress with more earnestness to grant him a favour than the doctor did me for my pill. I should very probably have continued the deceit a little longer, and have endeavoured to extract another piece from him; but when I saw him preparing a doze of his own mixture to ease my pain, I thought it high time to finish,

and pretending all of a sudden to have received relief, I gave up my prize.

When once he had got possession, he looked at it with intense eagerness, and turned it over and over on his palm, without appearing one whit more advanced in his knowledge than before. At length, after permitting him fully to exhaust his conjectures, I told him that the Frank doctor had made no secret in saying that it was composed of jivch, or mercury. 'Mercury, indeed!' exclaimed Mirza Ahmak—'just as if I did not know that. And so, because this infidel, this dog of an Isauvi,¹ chooses to poison us with mercury, I am to lose my reputation, and my prescriptions (such as his father never even saw in a dream) are to be turned into ridicule. Who ever heard of mercury as a medicine? Mercury is cold, and lettuce and cucumber are cold also. You would not apply ice to dissolve ice? The ass does not know the first rudiments of his profession. No, Hajji, this will never do; we must not permit our beards to be laughed at in this manner.'

He continued to inveigh for a considerable time against his rival; and would, no doubt, have continued to do so much longer, but he was stopped by a message from the king, who ordered him to repair forthwith to his presence. In the greatest trepidation he immediately put himself into his court dress, exchanged his common black lamb-skin cap for one wound about with a shawl, huddled on his red cloth stockings, called for his horse, and, taking the pill with him, went off in a great hurry, and full of the greatest apprehension at what might be the result of the audience.

¹ Isauvi, a follower of Jesus.

CHAPTER XXI

HE DESCRIBES THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SHAH OF PERSIA
TAKES MEDICINE

THE doctor's visit to the king had taken place late in the evening; and as soon as he returned from it he called for me. I found him apparently in great agitation, and full of anxiety. 'Hajji,' said he, when I appeared, 'come close to me;' and having sent every one else out of the room, he said in a whisper, 'this infidel doctor must be disposed of somehow or other. What do you think has happened? The Shah has consulted him; he had him in private conference for an hour this morning, without my being apprised of it. His majesty sent for me to tell me its result; and I perceive that the Frank has already gained great influence. It seems that the king gave him the history of his complaints—of his debility, of his old asthma, and of his imperfect digestion, but talked in raptures of the wretch's sagacity and penetration; for merely by looking at the tongue and feeling the pulse before the infidel was told what was the state of the case, he asked whether his majesty¹ did not use the hot-baths very frequently; whether, when he smoked, he did not immediately bring on a fit of coughing; and whether, in his food, he was not particularly addicted to pickles, sweetmeats, and rice swimming in butter? The king has given him three days to consider his case, to consult his books, and to gather the opinions of the Frank sages on subjects so important to the state of Persia, and to compose such a medicine as will entirely restore and renovate his constitution. The Centre of the Universe then

¹ This is the most approved form of speech among well-educated Persians, whenever any allusion to the mysteries of the harem is intended.

asked my opinion, and requested me to speak boldly upon the natures and properties of Franks in general, and of their medicines. I did not lose this opportunity of giving utterance to my sentiments; so, after the usual preface to my speech, I said, "that as to their natures, the Shah, in his profound wisdom, must know that they were an unbelieving and an unclean race; for that they treated our Prophet as a cheat, and ate pork and drank wine without any scruple; that they were women in looks, and in manners bears; that they ought to be held in the greatest suspicion, for their ultimate object (see what they had done in India) was to take kingdoms, and to make Shahs and Nabobs their humble servants. As to their medicines," I exclaimed, "Heaven preserve your majesty from them! they are just as treacherous in their effects as the Franks are in their politics:—with what we give to procure death, they pretend to work their cures. Their principal ingredient is mercury (and here I produced my pill); and they use their instruments and knives so freely, that I have heard it said they will cut off a man's limbs to save his life." I then drew such a picture of the fatal effects likely to proceed from the foreign prescription, that I made the Shah promise that he would not take it without using every precaution that his prudence and wisdom might suggest. To this he consented; and as soon as the Frank shall have sent in the medicine which he is preparing, I shall be summoned to another interview. Now, Hajji,' added the doctor, 'the Shah must not touch the infidel's physic; for if perchance it were to do good, I am a lost man. Who will ever consult Mirza Ahmak again? No, we must avert the occurrence of such an event, even if I were obliged to take all his drugs myself.'

We parted with mutual promises of doing everything in our power to thwart the infidel doctor; and three days after Mirza Ahmak was again called before the king in order to inspect the promised ordonnance, and which consisted of a box of pills. He, of course, created all sorts of suspicions against their efficacy, threw out some dark hints about the danger of receiving any drug from the agent of a foreign power, and finally,

left the Shah in the determination of referring the case to his ministers. The next day, at the usual public audience, when the Shah was seated on his throne, and surrounded by his prime vizier, his lord high treasurer, his minister for the interior, his principal secretary of state, his lord chamberlain, his master of the horse, his principal master of the ceremonies, his doctor in chief, and many other of the great officers of his household, addressing himself to his grand vizier, he stated the negotiations which he had entered into with the foreign physician, now resident at his court, for the restoration and the renovation of the royal person; that at the first conference, the said foreign physician, after a due inspection of the royal person, had reported that there existed several symptoms of debility. That at the second, after assuring the Shah that he had for three whole days employed himself in consulting his books and records, and gathering from them the opinions of his own country sages on the subject, he had combined the properties of various drugs into one whole, which, if taken interiorly, would produce effects so wonderful, that no talisman could come in competition with it. His majesty then said, that he had called into his councils his Hakfm bashi, or head physician, who, in his anxiety for the weal of the Persian monarchy, had deeply pondered over the ordonnances of the foreigner, and had set his face against them, owing to certain doubts and apprehensions that had crept into his mind, which consisted, first, whether it were politic to deliver over the internal administration of the royal person to foreign regulations and ordonnances; and, second, whether, in the remedy prescribed, there might not exist such latent and destructive effects, as would endanger, undermine, and, finally, overthrow that royal person and constitution, which it was supposed to be intended to restore and renovate. 'Under these circumstances,' said the Centre of the Universe, raising his voice at the time, 'I have thought it advisable to pause before I proceeded in this business; and have resolved to lay the case before you, in order that you may, in your united wisdoms, frame such an opinion as may be fitting to be placed before the king: and in

order that you may go into the subject with a complete knowledge of the case, I have resolved, as a preparatory act, that each of you, in your own persons, shall partake of this medicine, in order that both you and I may judge of its various effects.'

To this most gracious speech the grand vizier and all the courtiers made exclamations, 'May the king live for ever! May the royal shadow never be less! We are happy not only to take physic, but to lay down our lives in your majesty's service! We are your sacrifice, your slaves! May God give the Shah health, and a victory over all his enemies!' Upon which, the chief of the valets was ordered to bring the foreign physician's box of pills from the harem, and delivered it to the Shah in a golden salver. His majesty then ordered the Hakim bashi to approach, and delivering the box to him, ordered him to go round to all present, beginning with the prime vizier, and then to every man according to his rank, administering to each a pill.

This being done, the whole assembly took the prescribed gulp; after which ensued a general pause, during which the king looked carefully into each man's face to mark the first effects of the medicine. When the wry faces had subsided, the conversation took a turn upon the affairs of Europe; upon which his majesty asked a variety of questions, which were answered by the different persons present in the best manner they were able.

The medicine now gradually began to show its effects. The lord high treasurer first, a large coarse man, who to this moment had stood immovable, merely saying *belli, belli*, yes, yes, whenever his majesty opened his mouth to speak, now appeared uneasy, for what he had swallowed had brought into action a store of old complaints which were before lying dormant. The eyes of all had been directed towards him, which had much increased his perturbed state; when the chief secretary of state, a tall, thin, lathy man, turned deadly pale, and began to stream from every pore. He was followed by the minister for the interior, whose unhappy looks seemed to supplicate a permission from his majesty to quit his august

presence. All the rest in succession were moved in various ways, except the prime vizier, a little old man, famous for a hard and unyielding nature, and who appeared to be laughing in his sleeve at the misery which his compeers in office were undergoing.

As soon as the Shah perceived that the medicine had taken effect, he dismissed the assembly, ordering Mirza Ahmak, as soon as he could ascertain the history of each pill, to give him an official report of the whole transaction, and then retired into his harem.

The crafty old doctor had now his rival within his power; of course he set the matter in such a light before the king, that his majesty was deterred from making the experiment of the foreign physician's ordonnance, and it was forthwith consigned to oblivion. When he next saw me, and after he had made me acquainted with the preceding narrative, he could not restrain his joy and exultation. 'We have conquered, friend Hajji,' would he say to me. 'The infidel thought that we were fools; but we will teach him what Persians are. Whose dog is he, that he should aspire to so high an honour as prescribing for a king of kings? No, that is left to such men as I. What do we care about his new discoveries? As our fathers did, so are we contented to do. The prescription that cured our ancestors shall cure us; and what Locman and Abou Avicenna ordained, we may be satisfied to ordain after them.' He then dismissed me, to make fresh plans for destroying any influence or credit that the new physician might acquire, and for preserving his own consequence and reputation at court.

CHAPTER XXII

HAJJÍ BABA ASKS THE DOCTOR FOR A SALARY, AND OF THE
SUCCESS OF HIS DEMAND

I HAD thus far lived with the doctor more as a friend than as a servant; for he permitted me to sit in his presence, to eat with him, and even to smoke his pipe, whilst at the same time I associated with his servants, ate, drank, and smoked with them also; but I found that this sort of life in nowise suited my views and expectations. The only money which I had received from him was the gold coin aforementioned, for which I was indebted to my own ingenuity; and, as things went, it appeared that it would be the last. I was therefore resolved to come to an explanation with him, and accordingly seized the opportunity when he was elated with his success over the European doctor, to open the subject of my grievances.

He had just returned from the imperial gate, after having seen the Shah; who, by his account, had been very gracious to him, having kept him standing without his shoes only two hours, by the side of a stone fountain, instead of six, which he generally does. 'What a good king he is!' he exclaimed, 'how affable, how considerate! It is impossible to say how much kindness he shows to me. He gave abuse to the European doctor, all out of compliment to my abilities, and said that he is not fit to hold my shoes. He then ordered his favourite running footman to bring me a present of two partridges, which were caught by the royal hawks.'

I observed, 'Yes, the king says true. Who is your equal now-a-days is Persia? Happy Shah! to possess such a treasure. What are the Franks, that they should talk of medicine? If

they want learning, science, and skill, let them look to Mirza Ahmak.'

Upon this, with a smile of self-complacency, he took the pipe from his own mouth and gave it to me, pulled up his mustachios, and stroked his beard.

'*Inshallah!* may it please God,' I continued to say, 'that I also may share in the glory of your reputation; but I am like a dog, I am nothing, I am not even like the piece of clay, which was scented by the company of the rose.'

'How!' said the doctor; 'why are you out of spirits?'

'I will leave you to judge, and relate a story,' said I. 'Once upon a time there was a dog, who in looks and manners was so like a wolf, that the wolves used to admit him into their society. He ate, drank, and killed sheep with them, and, in short, was everything that a wolf ought to be; at the same time, he lived with his fellow-dogs like a dog, and was admitted to all their parties. But, little by little, the dogs perceived that he associated with wolves, and became shy of him; and it also happened that the wolves discovered that he was in fact a dog, and did not like to admit him any longer into their circles; so between both, the poor dog became neglected and miserable; and, unable to bear his undefined state any longer, he determined to make a decided effort to become either a dog or a wolf. I am that dog!' exclaimed I; 'you permit me to sit and smoke with you, who are so much my superior; you talk to and consult me, and I am even admitted to the society of your friends; but what does that benefit me? I am still a servant, without enjoying any of the advantages of one: I get nothing. I pray you therefore to appoint me to the situation you wish me to hold in your service, and to fix a salary upon me.'

'A salary indeed!' exclaimed the doctor: 'I never give salaries. My servants get what they can from my patients, and you may do the same; they eat the remains of my dinner, and they receive a coat at the festival of the *No Rûz*¹—what

¹ The *No Rûz*, or the new day, is the great Persian festival, which takes place every spring, when the Sun enters Aries. It is not of Mohammedan origin, and dates from very remote antiquity.

can they want more?' At this moment entered the Shah's running footman, bearing in his hands a silver tray, upon which were placed the two partridges that his majesty had presented to the doctor, and which in great form he gave into his hands, who, rising from his seat, carried the tray to his head, and exclaimed, 'May the king's kindness never be less!—may his wealth increase, and may he live for ever!'

He then was called upon to make the bearer a present. He sent first five piastres,¹ which the servant returned with great indignation. He then sent one tomaun: this also was sent back, until at length in despair he sent five tomauns, which, it was intimated, was the sum proper to be given. This disagreeable circumstance dissipated all the pleasure which such a present had produced, and the Hakîm, in his rage, permitted himself to use such expressions which, if reported to the king, would have brought him into considerable trouble. 'A present indeed!' said he; 'I wish such presents were in the other world! 'Tis thus we pay the wages of the king's servants—a set of rapacious rascals, without either shame or conscience! And the worst of it is, we must pay them handsomely, or else whenever it happens that I get the bastinado on the soles of my feet, which come it will, they, who perform the operation, will show me no mercy. Let me not forget what Saadi says, that you can no more depend upon the friendship of a king than you can upon the voice of a child; because the former changes on the slightest suspicion, the latter in the course of a night.'

Upon this reflection, the doctor began to be alarmed at what he had said at the outset of his speech; and, with all the terrors of the felek before him, he seemed quite reconciled to the loss of his five tomauns.

I found that this would not be the best moment to resume the subject of my expectations, and therefore reserved

¹ A piastre is about two shillings.

it for some future opportunity; but I had heard enough to settle in my own mind, that I would leave the 'Locman of the age' whenever an opportunity should offer, and for the present to content myself with being neither dog nor wolf.

CHAPTER XXIII

HE BECOMES DISSATISFIED WITH HIS SITUATION, IS IDLE,
AND FALLS IN LOVE

DISCONTENTED with my present lot, and uncertain as to my future prospects, my days passed on in total idleness; and, as I had no inclination to pursue the profession of physic, which many before me had done quite on as slender a foundation as the one I had acquired, I cared little for those pursuits which engaged Mirza Ahmak. I should very probably have left him instantly, if a circumstance had not occurred, arising from the very state of unprofitableness in which I lived, which detained me in his house. The feelings to which it gave rise so entirely absorbed every other consideration, that I became their slave; and so violent were the emotions which they created, that I verily believe that Majnoun in the height of his frenzy could not have been madder than I. After this, it is needless to mention that I was in love.

The spring had passed over, and the first heats of summer, which now began to make themselves felt, had driven most of the inhabitants of the city to spread their beds and sleep on the house-tops. As I did not like to pass my night in company of the servants, the carpet-spreaders, and the cook, who generally herded together in a room below, I extended my bed in a corner of the terrace, which overlooked the inner court of the doctor's house, in which were situated the apartments of the women. This court was a square, into which the windows of the different chambers looked, and was planted in the centre with rose-bushes, jessamines, and poplar-trees. A square wooden platform was erected in the middle, upon which mattresses were spread, where the inhabitants reposed during

the great heats. I had seen several women seated in different parts of the court, but had never been particularly struck by the appearance of any one of them; and indeed had I been so, perhaps I should never have thought of looking at them again; for as soon as I was discovered, shouts of abuse were levelled at me, and I was called by every odious name that they could devise.

One night, however, soon after the sun had set, as I was preparing my bed, I perchance looked over a part of the wall that was a little broken down, and on a slip of terrace that was close under it I discovered a female, who was employed in assorting and spreading out tobacco-leaves. Her blue veil was negligently thrown over her head, and as she stooped, the two long tresses which flowed from her forehead hung down in so tantalising a manner as nearly to screen all her face, but still left so much of it visible, that it created an intense desire in me to see the remainder. Everything that I saw in her announced beauty. Her hands were small and dyed with khenna;¹ her feet were equally small; and her whole air and form bespoke loveliness and grace. I gazed upon her until I could no longer contain my passion; I made a slight noise, which immediately caused her to look up, and before she could cover herself with her veil, I had had time to see the most enchanting features that the imagination can conceive, and to receive a look from eyes so bewitching, that I immediately felt my heart in a blaze. With apparent displeasure she covered herself; but still I could perceive that she had managed her veil with so much art, that there was room for a certain dark and sparkling eye to look at me, and to enjoy my agitation. As I continued to gaze upon her, she at length said, though still going on with her work, 'Why do you look at me? It is criminal.'

'For the sake of the sainted Hosein,' I exclaimed, 'do not

¹ The dye is used throughout the whole of Asia, and produces a strong orange, or auburn colour. The Persians dye the whole of their hands as far as the wrists with it, and also the soles of their feet. The Turks more commonly only tinge the nails: both use it for the hair.

turn from me ; it is no crime to love : your eyes have made roast-meat of my heart : by the mother that bore you, let me look upon your face again.'

In a more subdued voice she answered me, 'Why do you ask me? You know it is a crime for a woman to let her face be seen ; and you are neither my father, my brother, nor my husband ; I do not even know who you are. Have you no shame, to talk thus to a maid?'

At this moment she let her veil fall, as if by chance, and I had time to look again upon her face, which was even more beautiful than I had imagined. Her eyes were large and peculiarly black, and fringed with long lashes, which, aided by the collyrium with which they were tinged, formed a sort of ambuscade, from which she levelled her shafts. Her eyebrows were finely arched, and nature had brought them together just over her nose, in so strong a line, that there was no need of art to join them together. Her nose was aquiline, her mouth small, and full of sweet expression ; and in the centre of her chin was a dimple which she kept carefully marked with a blue puncture. Nothing could equal the beauty of her hair ; it was black as jet, and fell in long tresses down her back. In short, I was rapt in amazement at her beauty. The sight of her explained to me many things which I had read in our poets, of cypress forms, tender fawns, and sugar-eating parrots. It seemed to me that I could gaze at her for ever, and not be tired ; but still I felt a great desire to leap over the wall and touch her. My passion was increasing, and I was on the point of approaching her, when I heard the name of Zeenab repeated several times, with great impatience, by a loud shrill voice ; upon which my fair one left the terrace in haste, and I remained riveted to the place where I had first seen her. I continued there for a long time, in the hope that she might return, but to no purpose. I lent my ear to every noise, but nothing was to be heard below but the same angry voice, which, by turns, appeared to attack everything, and everybody, and which could belong to no one but the doctor's wife ; a lady, who, as report would have it, was none

of the mildest of her sex, and who kept her good man in great subjection.

The day had now entirely closed in, and I was about retiring to my bed in despair, when the voice was heard again, exclaiming, 'Zeenab, where are you going to? Why do you not retire to bed?'

I indistinctly heard the answer of my charmer, but soon guessed what it had been, when I saw her appear on the terrace again. My heart beat violently, and I was about to leap over the wall, which separated us, when I was stopped by seeing her taking up a basket, in which she had gathered her tobacco, and make a hasty retreat; but just as she was disappearing, she said to me, in a low tone of voice, 'Be here to-morrow night.' These words thrilled through my whole frame, in a manner that I had never before felt, and I did not cease to repeat them, and ponder over them, until, through exhaustion, I fell into a feverish dose, and I did not awaken on the following morning until the beams of the sun shone bright in my face.

CHAPTER XXIV

HE HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FAIR ZEENAB, WHO RELATES
HOW SHE PASSES HER TIME IN THE DOCTOR'S HAREM

'So,' said I, when I had well rubbed my eyes: 'so, now I am in love? Well! we shall see what will come of it. Who and what she is, we shall know to-night, so please it; and if she is anything which belongs to the doctor, may his house be ruined if I do not teach him how to keep a better watch over his property. As for marriage, that is out of the question. Who would give a wife to me; I who have not even enough to buy myself a pair of trousers, much less to defray the expenses of a wedding? *Inshallah*, please God, that will take place one of these days, whenever I shall have got together some money: but now I will make play with love, and let the doctor pay for it.'

With that intention I forthwith got up and dressed myself; but it was with more care than usual. I combed my curls a great deal more than ordinary; I studied the tie of my girdle, and put my cap on one side. Then having rolled up my bed, and carried it into the servants' hall, I issued from home, with the intention of bathing, and making my person sweet, preparatory to my evening's assignation. I went to the bath, where I passed a great part of my morning in singing, and spent the remainder of the time, until the hour of meeting, in rambling about the town without any precise object in view.

At length the day drew towards its close, my impatience had reached its height, and I only waited for the termination of the shâm, or the evening's meal, to feign a headache, and to retire to rest. My ill luck would have it, that the doctor was detained longer than usual in his attendance upon the Shah,

and as the servants dined after him, and ate his leavings, it was late before I was at liberty. When that moment arrived, I was in a fever of expectation: the last glimmering of day tinged the western sky with a light shade of red, and the moon was just rising, when I appeared on the terrace with my bed under my arm. I threw it down and unfolded it in haste, and then, with a beating heart, flew to the broken wall. I looked over it with great precaution; but, to my utter disappointment, I saw nothing but the tobacco spread about in confused heaps, with baskets here and there, as if some work had been left unfinished. I looked all around, but saw no Zeenab. I coughed once or twice; no answer. The only sound which reached my ears was the voice of the doctor's wife, exerting itself upon some one within the house, although its shrillness pierced even the walls; yet I could not make out what was the cause of its being so excited, until of a sudden it burst into the open air with increasing violence.

'You talk of work to me, you daughter of the devil! Who told you to go to the bath? What business had you at the tombs? I suppose I am to be your slave, and you are to take your pleasure. Why is not your work done? You shall neither eat, drink, nor sleep until it is done, so go to it immediately; and if you come away until it be finished, *wallah! billah!* by the prophet, I will beat you till your nails drop off.' Upon this I heard some pushing and scuffling, and immediately perceived my fair one proceeding with apparent reluctance to the spot, which not a moment before I had despaired of seeing blessed with her presence. Oh what a wonderful thing is love! thought I to myself: how it sharpens the wits, and how fertile it is in expedients! I perceived at a glance how ingeniously my charmer had contrived everything for our interview, and for a continuance of it without the fear of interruption. She saw, but took no notice of me until the storm below had ceased; and then, when everything had relapsed into silence, she came towards me, and, as the reader may well suppose, I was at her side in an instant. Ye, who know what love is, may, perhaps, conceive our raptures, for they are not to be expressed.

I learnt from my fair friend that she was the daughter of a Kûrdish chief, who, with his whole family, including his flocks and herds, had been made prisoner when she was quite a child; and that, from circumstances which she promised hereafter to relate to me, she had fallen into the hands of the doctor, whose slave she now was.

After the first burst of the sentiments which we felt towards each other had subsided, she gave way to the feelings of anger, which she felt for the treatment that she had just experienced. 'Ah!' she exclaimed, 'did you hear what that woman called me! woman, without faith, without religion! 'Tis thus she always treats me; she constantly gives me abuse; I am become less than a dog. Everybody rails at me; no one comes near me; my liver is become water, and my soul is withered up. Why should I be called a child of the devil? I am a Kûrd; I am a Yezeedi.¹ 'Tis true that we fear the devil, and who does not? but I am no child of his. Oh that I could meet her in our mountains! she would then see what a Kûrdish girl can do.'

I endeavoured to console her as well as I could, and persuaded her to smother her resentment until she could find a good opportunity of revenging herself. She despaired at that ever coming to pass; because all her actions were so strictly watched, that she could scarcely go from one room to another without her mistress being aware of it. The fact was, so she informed me, that the doctor, who was a man of low family, had, by orders of the king, married one of his Majesty's slaves, who, from some misconduct, had been expelled the harem. She brought to the doctor no other dowry than an ill-temper, and a great share of pride, which always kept her in mind of her former influence at court; and she therefore holds her present husband as cheap as the dust under her feet, and keeps him in a most pitiful state of subjection. He dares not sit down before her, unless she permits him, which she very seldom does; and she is moreover so jealous, that there

¹ The Yezeedis are a tribe of the Kûrds, who are said to worship the devil.

is no slave in her harem who does not excite her suspicions. The doctor, on the other hand, who is very ambitious, and pleased with his exaltation, is also subject to the frailties of human nature, and is by no means insensible to the charms of the fair creatures, his slaves. Zeenab herself, so she informed me, is the peculiar object of his attentions, and consequently that of the jealousy of his wife, who permits no look, word, or sign to pass unnoticed. Much intrigue and espionage is carried on in the harem; and when the lady herself goes to the bath or the mosque, as many precautions are taken about the distribution of the female slaves, with respect to time, place, and opportunity, as there would be in the arrangement of a wedding.

Having never seen more of the interior of an *anderûn* than what I recollected as a boy in my own family, I became surprised, and my curiosity was greatly excited in proportion as the fair Zeenab proceeded in her narrative of the history of her life in the doctor's house. 'We are five in the harem, besides our mistress,' said she: 'there is Shireen, the Georgian slave; then Nûr Jehan,¹ the Ethiopian slave-girl; Fatmeh, the cook; and old Leilah, the duenna. My situation is that of hand-maid to the khanum,² so my mistress is called: I attend her pipe, I hand her her coffee, bring in the meals, go with her to the bath, dress and undress her, make her clothes, spread, sift, and pound tobacco, and stand before her. Shireen, the Georgian, is the *sandukdar*, or housekeeper: she has the care of the clothes of both my master and mistress, and indeed of the clothes of all the house; she superintends the expenses, lays in the corn for the house, as well as all the other provisions; she takes charge of all the porcelain, the silver, and other ware; and, in short, has the care of whatever is either precious or of consequence in the family. Nûr Jehan, the black slave, acts as *ferash*, or carpet-spreader: she does all the dirty work,

¹ The Persians give most magnificent names to their negro slaves. Thus *Nûr Jehan* means, light of the world.

² *Khanum* is the title usually given to a Persian lady, and is equivalent to madam.

spreads the carpets, sweeps the rooms, sprinkles the water over the court-yard, helps the cook, carries parcels and messages, and, in short, is at the call of every one. As for old Leilah, she is a sort of duenna over the young slaves: she is employed in the out-of-door service, carries on any little affair that the khanum may have with other harems, and is also supposed to be a spy upon the actions of the doctor. Such as we are, our days are passed in peevish disputes; whilst, at the same time, some two of us are usually leagued in strict friendship, to the exclusion of the others. At this present moment I am at open war with the Georgian, who, some time ago, found that her good luck in life had forsaken her, and she in consequence contrived to procure a talisman from a dervish. She had no sooner obtained it, than on the very next day the khanum presented her with a new jacket; this so excited my jealousy, that I also made interest with the dervish to supply me with a talisman that should secure me a good husband. On that very same evening I saw you on the terrace. Conceive my happiness! But this has established a rivalry between myself and Shireen, which has ended in hatred, and we are now mortal enemies: perhaps we may as suddenly be friends again. I am now on the most intimate terms with Nûr Jehan, and at my persuasion she reports to the khanum every story unfavourable to my rival. Some rare sweetmeats, with baklava (sweet cake) made in the royal seraglio, were sent a few days ago from one of the Shah's ladies, as a present to our mistress; the rats ate a great part of them, and we gave out that the Georgian was the culprit, for which she received blows on the feet, which Nûr Jehan administered. I broke my mistress's favourite drinking-cup; Shireen incurred the blame, and was obliged to supply another. I know that she is plotting against me, for she is eternally closeted with Leilah, who is at present the confidant of our mistress. I take care not to eat or drink anything which has passed through her hands to me, for fear of poison, and she returns me the same compliment. It is not that our hatred amounts to poison yet, but such pre-

cautions are constantly in use in all harems. We have as yet only once come to blows: she excited me to violent anger by spitting and saying, *lahnet be Sheitan*, curse be on the devil, which you know to the Yezeedis is a gross insult; when I fell upon her, calling her by every wicked name that I had learnt in Persian, and fastening upon her hair, of which I pulled out whole tresses by the roots. We were parted by Leilah, who came in for her share of abuse, and we continued railing at each other until our throats were quite dried up with rage and exhaustion. Our violence has much abated since this conflict; but her enmity is undiminished, for she continues to show her spite against me in every manner she can devise.'

Zeenab continued to entertain me in this manner until the first dawn of the morning, and when we heard the muezzin¹ call the morning prayers from the mosque, we thought it prudent to retire; but not until we had made mutual promises of seeing each other as prudence would allow. We agreed, that whenever she had by her stratagems secured an opportunity for meeting, she should hang her veil upon the bough of a tree in the court, which could be seen from my terrace: and that if it were not there, I was to conclude that our interview on that night was impossible.

¹ The priest is so called who invites the Mohammedans to prayers from the minaret, or from the roof of the mosque.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LOVERS MEET AGAIN, AND ARE VERY HAPPY. HAJJI
BABA SINGS

ON the following evening, I ascended the terrace in the hope of seeing the signal of meeting; but in vain; no veil was visible; and I sat myself down in despair. The tobacco, and all the apparatus for cleaning it, had disappeared, and all was hushed below. Even the unceasing voice of the doctor's wife, which I now began to look upon as the most agreeable sound in nature, was wanting; and the occasional drag of a slipper, which I guessed might proceed from the crawl of old Leilah, was the only sign of an inhabitant. I had in succession watched the distant din of the king's band, the crash of the drums, and the swell of the trumpets, announcing sunset. I had listened to the various tones of the muezzins, announcing the evening prayer; as well as to the small drum of the police, ordering the people to shut their shops, and retire to their homes. The cry of the sentinels on the watch-towers of the king's palace was heard at distant intervals: night had completely closed in upon me, and still the same silence prevailed in the doctor's harem.

'What can be the reason of this?' said I to myself. 'If they have been to the bath, they cannot have remained thus late: besides, the baths are open for the women in the mornings only. Some one must be sick, or there is a marriage, or a birth, or perhaps a burial; or the doctor may have received the bastinado: in short, I was killing myself with conjecture, when of a sudden a great beating at the door took place, and, as it opened, the clatter of slippers was heard, attended by the mingled sounds of many female voices, amongst which

the well-known querulous tone of the khanum was prominent. Several lanterns passed to and fro, which showed me the forms of the women, amongst whom, as they threw off their veils, I recognised that of my Zeenab. I determined to watch, in the hope that I might still be blessed with an interview; and, in fact, it was not long before she appeared. She stole to me with great precaution, to say that circumstances would prevent our meeting on this occasion, as she should not fail being missed; but that, certainly, ere long, she would contrive to secure an interview. In few words, she informed me that her mistress had been called upon to attend her sister (one of the ladies in the Shah's seraglio) who, being taken suddenly ill, had expired almost immediately (it was supposed by poison administered by a rival), and that she had taken all her women with her, in order to increase the clamour of lamentation which was always made on such occasions; that they had been there since noon, rending the air with every proper exclamation, until they were all hoarse; that her mistress had already torn her clothes,—an etiquette which she had performed, however, with great care, considering that she wore a favourite jacket, having permitted only one or two seams of it to be ripped open. As the burial would take place the next day, it was necessary that they should be at their post early in the morning to continue the lamentations,—a service for which she expected to receive a black handkerchief, and to eat sweetmeats. My fair one then left me, promising that she would do her utmost to secure a meeting on the following evening, and telling me not to forget the signal.

On getting up the next morning, I was much surprised to see it already made, and to perceive Zeenab below, beckoning me to go to her. I did not hesitate immediately to descend from the terrace by the same small flight of steps which she used to ascend it, and then of a sudden I found myself in the very centre of the harem. An involuntary tremor seized me, when I reflected that I was in a place into which no man with impunity is permitted to enter; but, fortified by the smiles and the unconstrained manner of my enchantress, I proceeded.

'Come, Hajjt,' said she, 'banish all fear; no one is here but Zeenab, and, if our luck is good, we may have the whole day to ourselves.'

'By what miracle,' exclaimed I, 'have you done this? Where is the khanum? where are the women? and, if they are not here, how shall I escape the doctor?'

'Do not fear,' she repeated again; 'I have barred all the doors; and should any one come, you will have time to escape before I open them: but there is no fear of that; all the women are gone to the funeral: and as for Mirza Ahmak, my mistress has taken care to dispose of him in such a manner, now that I am left by myself, that he will not dare to come within a parasang of his own house. You must know then,' said she, 'for I see you are all astonishment, that our destinies are on the rise, and that it was a lucky hour when we first saw each other. Everything plays into our hands. My rival, the Georgian, put it into the khanum's head, that Leilah, who is a professed weeper at burials, having learned the art, in all its branches, since a child, was a personage absolutely necessary on the present occasion, and that she ought to go in preference to me, who am a Kûrd, and can know but little of Persian customs: all this, of course, to deprive me of my black handkerchief, and other advantages. Accordingly, I have been left at home; and the whole party went off an hour ago to the house of the deceased. I pretended to be very angry, and opposed Leilah's taking my place with apparent warmth; but, thank Heaven, here we are, and so let us make the most of our time.'

Upon which she went into the kitchen to prepare a tray, containing a breakfast for me, whilst she left me to explore that which is hidden from all bachelors, namely, the interior of the harem.

I first went into the apartments of the khanum herself. It opened upon the garden by an immense sash-window, composed of stained glass; and in the corner was the accustomed seat of the lady, marked by a thick felt carpet, folded double, and a large down cushion, covered with cloth of gold, with

two tassels at the extremities, and veiled by a thin outer covering of muslin. Near this seat was a looking-glass, prettily painted, and a box containing all sorts of curiosities; the surm e (collyrium) for the eyes, with its small instrument for applying it; some Chinese rouge, a pair of armlets, containing talismans; a to  zoulfeh, or an ornament to hitch into the hair, and hang on the forehead; a knife, scissors, and other things. A guitar and a tambourine lay close at hand. Her bed, rolled up in a distant corner, was enclosed in a large wrapper of blue and white cloth. Several pictures, without frames, were hung against the walls, and the shelf which occupied the top of the room was covered with different sorts of glasses, basins, etc. In a corner were seen several bottles of Shiraz wine, one of which, just stopped with a flower, appeared to have been used by the good lady that very morning; most likely in order to keep up her spirits during the melancholy ceremony she was about to attend.

‘So,’ said I to myself, ‘the Prophet is not much heeded in this house. I shall know another time how to appreciate a sanctified and mortified look. Our doctor, who calls himself a staunch Mussulman, I see makes up for his large potations of cold water and sherbet abroad, by his good stock of wine at home.’

By the time I had satisfied my curiosity here, and had inspected the other rooms, which belonged to the servants, Zeenab had prepared our breakfast, which she placed before us in the khanum’s room. We sat down next to each other, and reposed upon the very cushion of which I have just given the description. Nothing could be more delicious than the meal which she had prepared: there was a dish of rice, white as snow, and near it a plate of roast meat, cut into small bits, wrapped up in a large flap of bread; then a beautiful Ispahan melon, in long slices; some pears and apricots; an omelette warmed from a preceding meal; cheese, onions, and leeks; a basin of sour curds, and two different sorts of sherbet: added to this, we had some delicious sweetmeats, and a basin full of new honey.

‘How, in the name of your mother,’ exclaimed I, as I pulled up my whiskers, and surveyed the good things before me, ‘how

have you managed to collect all this so soon? This is a breakfast fit for the Shah.'

'Oh, as to that,' she replied, 'do not trouble yourself, but fall to. My mistress ordered her breakfast to be prepared overnight, but on second thoughts this morning she determined to make her meal at the house of the deceased, and has left me, as you see, but little to do. Come, let us eat and be merry.'

Accordingly, we did honour to the breakfast, and left but little for those who might come after us. After we had washed our hands, we placed the wine before us, and having each broken the commandment by taking a cup, we congratulated ourselves upon being two of the happiest of human beings.

Such was my delight, that taking up the guitar which was near me, and putting aside all apprehension for the present, and all care for the future, I tuned it to my voice, and sang the following ode of Hafiz, which I had learnt in my youth, when I used to charm my hearers in the bath :—

What bliss is like to whisp'ring love,
Or dalliance in the bowers of spring?
Why then delay my bliss t' improve?
Haste, haste, my love, the goblet bring.

Each hour that joy and mirth bestow,
Call it treasure, count it gain ;
Fool is the man who seeks to know
His pleasure will it end in pain !

The links which our existence bind
Hang not by one weak thread alone ;
Of man's distress why tease the mind?
Sufficient 'tis—we know our own.

The double charms of love and wine
Alike from one sweet source arise :
Are we to blame, shall we repine,
When unconstrain'd the passions rise?

If innocent in heart and mind,
I sin unconscious of offence,
What use, O casuist, shall I find
In absolution's recompense?

Hermits the flowing spring approve ;
Poets the sparkling bowl enjoy :
And, till he 's judged by powers above,
Hafiz will drink, and sing, and toy.

Zeenab was quite in ecstasy : she had never heard anything so delightful in her life, and forgetting that both of us were but wretched individuals,—she a slave, I the most destitute of beings,—we did and felt as if all that surrounded us was our own, and that the wine and our love would last for ever.

Having sung several more songs, and emptied several cups of wine, I found that my poetry was exhausted as well as our bottle.

It was still quite early, and we had much time before us. 'Zeenab,' said I, 'you have long promised to tell me the history of your life, and now is a good opportunity ; we are not likely to be interrupted for a long while, and, as our meetings at night are very uncertain, an hour cannot be better filled up than by the recital of your adventures.' She assented to my proposal with much good-humour, and began as follows.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE HISTORY OF ZEENAB, THE KÚRDISH SLAVE

'I AM the daughter of a chief, well known in the Kúrdistan by the name of Okous Aga. Who my mother was I do not precisely know. I have heard that I am the produce of one of the secret meetings at Kerrund;¹ but as such mysterious doings are hushed up among the Kúrd, I have never dared to question anybody concerning them, and cannot, therefore, ascertain whether the reports about my birth be true or not. It is very certain that I never looked up to any one as my mother; but was brought up at hazard among our women, and that my earliest friend was a foal, that lived as an inmate with us. It was born in the very tent which my father's wives occupied; and its dam, of the purest Arabian blood, was treated more like one of the family than a quadruped: in fact, it received much more attention than any of the wives; it enjoyed the warmest place in the tent, was beautifully clothed, and in all our journeys was the first object of our cares. When the mare died, an universal lamentation ensued throughout the encampment. The foal lived to be my father's war-horse, and it is to this day the pride of the Kúrdistan. But would to Heaven that we had felt less affection for these animals! then I might still have been a free woman; for, in truth, the many vicissitudes which

¹ This no doubt relates to certain mysterious and obscene customs, which are said to be practised among the Yezeedis, at the village of Kerrund, in the Kúrdistan, and peculiar to the tribe of *Násiri*, commonly called *Chiragh Kúsh*, or lamp-extinguishers. Antiquarians pretend to trace in them a resemblance to the abominable worship of Venus, as practised by the Babylonians, and recorded in Herodotus, Book I. § cxcix.

we have undergone originated in the possession of a mare, of which you shall hear more hereafter.

‘You must know, that although the Kûrds do not allow that they are subject to any power, yet our ancestors (and so did my father to a certain time) grazed their flocks and pitched their tents in that part of the Kûrdistan mountains belonging to Turkey, which are situated in the government of the Pasha of Bagdad. Whenever that chief had any war on his hands, he frequently called upon our tribes to afford him supplies of horsemen, who being celebrated throughout Asia, were always foremost in the battle. My father, from his strength, his courage, and his horsemanship, was a great favourite with the Pasha, and in high request on such occasions. He was a majestic figure on horseback ; and when his countenance was shaded by the back part of his cap thrown over his brow, his look inspired terror. He had killed several men, and was consequently honoured with the distinction of bearing a tuft of hair on his spear. But it was when clad in armour that he was most to be admired. I shall never forget the grandeur of his appearance, when, with his horse curvetting under him, I saw him in the midst of a thousand cavaliers all dressed in shining cuirasses, peacocks’ feathers streaming from their helmets, and their spears glittering in the sun, preparing themselves to join the Pasha. From the result of this expedition we date part of our misfortunes. The Wahabi had advanced into the territory of Bagdad, and even threatened that city, when the Pasha thought it high time to call the Kûrds to his assistance. He took the field with a considerable number of troops, and immediately marched against the enemy. In a night attack, my father happened to fall in with and slay the son of the Arab Sheikh himself, who commanded the Wahabi ; and, having despoiled him of his arms, he led away with him the mare which his antagonist had mounted. He too well knew the value of such a prize not immediately to take the utmost care of it ; and, in order to keep his good fortune from the knowledge of the Turkish chieftain, who would do everything in his power to get it from him, he sent the beast to his encampment,

with orders that it should be carefully concealed, and lodged in the tent which his harem occupied. His precautions were useless, because the feat which he had performed, and the circumstances attending it, were soon known to every one; but as the Pasha had a great esteem for him, and there being no reason to suppose that the mare was more than an ordinary one, he made no inquiries about her. However, not very long after the war had ceased, the Wahabi having been driven back into the desert, and the Kûrds having retired to their mountains, we were surprised one morning by a visit from one of the Pasha's chief officers, viz., the Mirakhor, or master of the horse, who came escorted by a handsome train of ten men, well mounted and armed. Everybody was immediately on the alert to do them honour. Their horses were taken to the nearest pasture, and picketed with plenty of grass before them; the horsemen were led into the men's tent with much ceremony, where they were treated with coffee and pipes; and a large caldron of rice was set on the fire to make a pilau. Two lambs were immediately killed, and cooked into a savoury dish by the women, who also baked piles of bread on the occasion. In short, we did all in our power to put into practice those obligations of hospitality which are binding upon the wandering tribes.

'As soon as my father was apprised of the approach of his visitors, even when they were first espied at a distance, it immediately occurred to him what might be their object, and he ordered his eldest son to mount the mare without a moment's delay, and take her to a neighbouring dell until he should hear further from him. Our tents were pitched in a line, on the brink of a mountain torrent; and it was therefore easy to steal away unperceived in the deep bed through which it flowed; and the high mountains in our neighbourhood, with the intricacies of which we were well acquainted, afforded good shelter to us in cases of disturbance.

'I recollect the whole circumstance just as if it were yesterday; for we women could peep into the place where the men were assembled, and our curiosity led us to listen to what they said. The Mirakhor and two other Turks were seated; the

others stood at the entrance of the tent, resting on their arms. My father placed himself at some distance, on the carpet, with his hands before him, and his feet tucked under him, looking very humble, but at the same time casting his eyes very sharply around him.

“You are welcome, and you have brought happiness with you,” exclaimed my father.

“Happily met,” answered the Mirakhor; “it is long since we have seen each other”; and when they had repeated these and similar sorts of compliments over and over again, they relapsed into silence; their pipes, which they smoked until the place was darkened with the fume, holding them in lieu of conversation.

“Our master, the Pasha,” said the Mirakhor, “sends you health and peace; he loves you, and says that you are one of his best and oldest friends. *Mashallah!* praise be to God! You are a good man; all Kûrds are good; their friends are our friends, and their enemies our enemies.”

‘An old Turk, who was standing, the foremost of the attendants, applauded this speech by a sort of low growl; and then my father, shrugging up his shoulders, and pressing his hands on his knees, answered: “I am the Pasha’s slave; I am your slave; you do me much honour. *Il hem dillah,* thanks to Heaven, we eat our bread in peace under the Pasha’s shade, and put our caps on one side without fear. God give him plenty.”

‘After a short pause: “The business of our coming, Okous Aga,” said the Mirakhor, “is this:—The Wahabi (curses be on their beards!) have sent a deputation to our chief, requiring from him the mare upon which the son of their Sheikh was mounted at the time that he was killed. Although they say that his blood is on our heads, and that nothing but the Pasha’s life, or that of his son, can ever redeem it, yet that subject they will for the present waive, in order to regain possession of her. They say she has the most perfect pedigree of any in Arabia; that from generation to generation her descent is to be traced to the mare which the Prophet rode on his flight

from Medina ; and, in order to regain her, they offer to throw money on the board until the Pasha shall say Stop ! Now all the world knows that you are the brave he, who overcame and slew the Sheik's son, and that yours is the spoil of the mare. My master, after consulting with the nobles and the chief men of Bagdad, has determined to take the offer of the Wahabi into consideration ; and since it is become a business of government, has sent me to request you to deliver her up into my hands.— This is my errand, and I have said it."

"*Wallah ! billah !* By the Pasha's salt which I have eat, by your soul, by the mother who bore you, by the stars and the heavens, I swear that all the Wahabi say is false. Where is the mare they pretend to have lost, and where the miserable jade that fell to my lot ? I got a mare, 'tis true, but so lean, so wretched, that I sold her to an Arab the day after the battle. You may have the bridle and saddle, if you please ; but as for the beast, I have her not."

"*Allah, Allah !*" exclaimed the Mirakhor, "this is a business of much consequence. Okous Aga, you are an upright man, and so am I. Do not laugh at our beards, and send us away without caps on our heads. If we do not bring back the mare, our faces will be black to all eternity, and the doors of friendship between you and the Pasha will be shut. By my soul, tell me ; where is the beast ?"

"Friend," answered my father, "what shall I say ? what can I do ? The mare is not here—the Wahabi are liars—and I speak the truth." Then with a softened tone, he approached the Mirakhor, and spoke to him for a long time in a whisper, with much animation and apparent persuasion ; for, at the end of their conversation, they appeared to be well agreed.

'The Mirakhor then said aloud : "Well, if such is the case, and the beast is not in your possession, *Allah kerim*, God is merciful, and there is no combating against fate. We must return to Bagdad."

'My father then rose from his seat, and came into the women's tent, leaving his guests to smoke their pipes and drink coffee, preparatory to the meal which was making ready

for them. He ordered his wife, who was the depository of his money, to bring him a bag of gold, that was carefully wrapped in many a piece of old cloth, and deposited in a trunk, which, with his rich horse furniture, the parade pack-saddle, and other things of value, were placed in a corner of the tent. He took out twenty Bajoglis (ducats), which he tied into the corner of a handkerchief, and thrust them into his bosom; and then giving his orders that the victuals should forthwith be served up, he returned to his guests. Little was said until the hour of eating came, and the few words that were uttered turned on horses, dogs, and arms. The Mirakhor drew from his girdle a long pistol, mounted in silver, which was shown around to all the company as a real English pistol. Another man exhibited his scimitar, which was assured to be a black Khorassani blade of the first water; and my father produced a long straight sword, sharp on both edges, which he had taken from the son of the Arab Sheikh whom he had slain.

'The dinner being ready, the round leathern cloth was placed before the Mirakhor, upon which many flaps of bread just baked, were thrown, and water was handed about for washing the right hand. A mess of chorba, or soup, was served up in a large wooden dish, and placed in the centre of the cloth. My father then said aloud, "*Bismillah*," in the name of God, and all the party, consisting of the Mirakhor, his ten followers, my father, and three of his attendants, settling themselves round the dish, with their right shoulders advanced forwards, partook of the soup with wooden spoons. A lamb roasted whole succeeded the mess, which was pulled to pieces in a short time, each man getting as large a portion of it for himself as he could. The feast was closed by an immense dish of rice, which was dived into by the hands and fingers of all present. As fast as they were satisfied, each man got up and washed, saying, *Shukur Allah*, thanks to God; and *Allah bereket versin*, may God restore you plenty. The remains were then rolled up in the leathern cloth, and taken outside the tents, where my father's shepherds soon made an end of them.

'The Mirakhor, being anxious to sleep at a village in the

plain, expressed a wish to depart, and his suite went to prepare their horses, leaving him and my father in the tent. I, who had narrowly watched the whole of the proceedings, was determined to see what should take place between them, and lent an ear to what they said.

“My father said, “Indeed ten ducats is all I can give—we are poor—where shall I find more?” To which the Mirakhor replied, “It is impossible : you know perfectly what will happen if I do not receive double that sum : the Pasha, when he finds that we have not brought the mare, will order me back again to seize you, and will take possession of all your property. I am indeed ordered to do that now, in case you refuse his request, but shall not touch you, if you come to my terms, which are twenty gold pieces. So, my friend, decide.” Upon which my father took the handkerchief from his bosom, and taking out the money from it, counted twenty ducats into the Mirakhor’s hand, who, when satisfied that they were all good, untied the white muslin that was wound round his turban, and placing them in the folds of it, twisted it round his head again. “Now,” said he to my father, “we have eat salt together ; we are friends ; and should the Pasha attempt anything, I will interfere. But you must send him a present, or otherwise it will be impossible to prevent him from molesting you.”

““*Bashem ustun*, upon my head be it !” answered my father. “I possess a famous greyhound, celebrated throughout the whole of the Kûrdistan, which can seize an antelope at full speed ; a creature the like of which the Shah of Persia’s father never even saw in a dream. Will that do ?”

““Perfectly well for one thing ; but that is not enough. Consider of what consequence it is that my master should be pleased with you.”

““I tell you what,” said he : “a thought has struck me ; I have a daughter, more beautiful than the moon, round, large-hipped, and greatly inclined to corpulency. You must say to him, that although the Yezeedis are infidels in his eyes, and as the dust under his feet, yet still he may perhaps be anxious to possess a beauty, which even the houris of Mohammed’s

Paradise would be jealous of, and I am ready to send her to him."

'The Mirakhor clapped his hands in ecstasy, and said, "*Aferin! Aferin!* well said! this is excellent! I will make the offer, and no doubt he will accept it; and thus you will have a powerful friend in his harem, who will get you out of this scrape, and protect you for the future." Upon this they seemed agreed. I, who it appears was to be the victim, left my watching-place to ruminate upon what was likely to be my future destiny. At first I was inclined to weep, and to lament over my fate; but after a little consideration, I exclaimed, "O my soul! am I to be a Pasha's lady? am I to wear fine clothes? am I to be borne in a litter? Oh! the delight of a litter will be too great! How all the girls of the mountain will envy me!"

'After some time had elapsed, looking from the tents into the open country, I saw the Mirakhor and his party, who had not failed to take the greyhound with him, duly dressed out in its gayest trappings, making their way along the side of the chain of hills which bordered our camp. I then heard my father expressing his thankfulness and gratitude for having so well got rid of such unwelcome visitors.

'As soon as they were fairly out of sight, he despatched one of his shepherd's boys to his son in the mountains, ordering him to bring back the mare: and when the animal was safely lodged in the women's tent, he called together the elders of his tribe, consisting of his own and his wives' relations, who were encamped in our vicinity. He explained to them the situation in which he was placed: showing that his and their destruction was inevitable should they continue any longer in the territory of the Pasha, who would not fail to seize this opportunity of levying fines and exactions, and reducing them to want and beggary. They were assembled in the men's tent, to the number of ten persons; the place of honour, the corner, being given to my father's uncle, the elder of the tribes, an old man, whose beard, as white as snow, descended to his girdle.

"You know," said my father, "that we are Yezeedis; and you also know the hatred which all Mussulmans bear to us; the

Pasha has hitherto pretended friendship to me individually, because I have fought his battles, because I am a lion in the fight, and drink the blood of his enemies; but his love of money is so great that nothing can satisfy it: and rather than lose this opportunity, he would see me, my father, my grandfather, my great-grandfather, and all my race grilling in eternal fires. We are too few to resist him, although, by that great Power whom we all worship, if we had not wives and children to protect, I, with a spear in my hand, my sword by my side, and mounted on my mare,—I would not fear to encounter the whole host of his dastardly ragamuffins, and I should like to see the *cherkaji*¹ that would face me. I propose, therefore, that, without a moment's delay, we abandon the Turkish territory, and migrate into Persia, where we shall not fail to meet with welcome and protection."

"Okous Aga," said his uncle to him, whilst every one seemed to listen with great respect to what he would say, "Okous Aga, you are my brother's son; you are my child; you are the head of our tribe, and our best support and protection. If I were to advise you to give up the mare to the Pasha, you would think me unworthy of being a Kûrd and a Yezeedi; and even were he now to get possession of her, we should not be spared; for such is the experience I have of Turkish governors, that when once they have a pretext in hand for oppression, they never fail to make use of it. Therefore, I am of your opinion,—we cannot remain here. Old as I am, and accustomed as I have been from my earliest infancy to graze our flocks and herds upon these mountains,—to see the sun rise over yonder hill and set in that distant plain,—much as I love these spots upon which our ancestors have been bred and born; yet it shall not be said that I have been the cause of the ruin of our tribe. I am, therefore, for immediate departure: delay now would be dangerous. In two more days we shall be visited by the Pasha's troops, who will take from us hostages, and then

¹ The *cherkajis* (literally *wheelers about*), in oriental armies are skirmishers, who are thrown out from the main body to engage in the fight, and are generally esteemed the most expert horsemen and the best soldiers.

here shall we be fixed, and here will ruin overwhelm us. Let us go, my children ; God is great and merciful. The time may come when you will be restored to your ancient seats, and when you may again range from your summer pastures to your winter quarters, and from your winter quarters to your pastures, without fear and apprehension."

'When he had done speaking, an old shepherd, who had great experience in all that related to the seasons, and considerable knowledge of the country between our mountains and those of Persia, spoke as follows:—"If we go, we must go immediately, for a day's delay might stop us. The snows on the mountains are already beginning to melt, and the torrents will be so swollen in another week, that we shall not be able to get the sheep across them. Besides, it is now about three weeks to the day when the sun enters the sign of the Ram, at which time our ewes will, *inshallah*, please God, bring forth in plenty ; and they ought to have performed their journey and be at rest long before that time. We ought to settle beforehand in what tract of country we shall fix ourselves, because the Persian wandering tribes are very tenacious of their rights of pasturage ; and should we trespass upon them, without proper authority from the government, our shepherds and theirs would not fail to come to blows, and God only knows the consequences."

"He speaks true," exclaimed my father : then turning to the shepherd, he exclaimed, "Well said, Karabeg ; well done ! you are a good servant, and you have given good advice. Before we think of establishing ourselves in Persia, one of us must go to Kermanshah, and ask leave of the Prince to appoint us to a good country ; and when once we have got out of the Pasha's reach, I will perform that service, and return to you in time to prevent strife with the other wandering tribes."

'The assembly being unanimous for immediate departure, my father gave his orders, that the cattle should be called in, the tents broken up, and the oxen in readiness to receive their loads ; that the camels should have their pack-saddles put upon them, and that everything should be in readiness to depart by

midnight, in order that we might reach our first stage about an hour after sunrise. His mare, which was now become an object of the first consequence, was to be mounted by my father, in person, whilst his chief wife, with her children, were to travel in the cajaveh or panniers; the camel which was to carry them being ornamented with trappings inlaid with beads, set off by red cloth trimmings, and a thick profusion of tassels.

‘As soon as this was known by the women, they set up shouts of wailing and lamentation. The evil appeared to them greater than it really was; for they expected nothing less than the immediate approach of the Pasha’s troops to seize upon the tribe, and carry them all into slavery.

‘As for me,’ said Zeenab, ‘my misery rose from another cause; for ever since I had overheard the conversation between my father and the Mirakhor, I could think of nothing else than of the charms of being a Pasha’s lady. My dream was now over, and instead of the rich dresses, the sumptuous palaces, the gilded litters, and the luxury of state, which I had flattered myself was to be my future lot, I had now nothing before me but my old drudgeries,—the loading of beasts, the packing up of baggage, the churning of milk, and the making of butter.

‘Our whole camp was now in motion; and, as far as the eye could reach, the mountains were swarming with the flocks and herds of our tribe, which were driven by the shepherds towards their different encampments. The tents were taken to pieces, and prepared for loading. The women, who took the greatest share in the labour of departure, were seen everywhere actively bestirring themselves to pack up the furniture and utensils. The carpets were rolled up; the camel-trunks filled; all the materials for making butter collected; and the pack-saddles of the mules, oxen, and camels, laid out for immediate use. The cattle having arrived, the camels were made to kneel down in a ring, and were covered with their pack-saddles; the oxen had their pads put upon them; and the mules were tied into strings of five or seven each, and ornamented with their bells and thick felt coverings. The sheep and goats, in the meanwhile, at the close of day, had already begun their march, guarded by their

watch-dogs, and accompanied by their shepherds, one of whom walked in front, whilst the whole train followed.

‘At midnight the whole camp had cleared the ground; and, as the day dawned, our line of march was to be seen to a great distance, winding along the mountains. We kept a track little followed, in order not to meet any one, who might give information of our movements to the Pasha; and, after several days’ march, we reached the frontier of Persia, with much fewer accidents, and much less difficulties, than might have been expected. During the journey, my father, in conjunction with the principal men of his tribe, kept a constant look-out in the rear, determined, should any one of the Pasha’s people approach us with an intention of impeding our progress, they would, without hesitation, make every resistance in their power. But fortune favoured us, and we saw none but shepherds, belonging to Kúrdish tribes, who occupied part of the country that we travelled over.

‘When we had reached a place of safety, my father rode forwards to Kermanshah, the seat of government of a powerful prince, one of the king of Persia’s sons, in order to claim his protection, and to receive his permission to occupy one of the pasturages situated within the Persian territory. We waited for his return with great anxiety, for in the meanwhile we were liable to an attack from both Turks and Persians; but as it is the policy of both countries to entice the wandering tribes into their territory, we met with no molestation from the chief of the Persian town which happened to be the nearest to us.

‘At length my father returned, and with him an officer belonging to the prince, who assigned us a tract of country, about ten parasangs within the Persian frontier. Our winter residence was situated in a sheltered nook of the mountains, not far from a copious spring of water; and our summer quarters, about three days’ journey off, were described as situated in the coolest spot of the adjacent mountains, abounding in grass and water, and distant from any chance of molestation from the Turks.

‘My father was a man well known at Kermanshah, and when his arrival and the object of his mission were known, the Prince

expressed great pleasure, treated him with much consideration, and dismissed him invested with a dress of honour. No stipulations were made as to the terms upon which he was to be received, and unlimited promises of protection were held out to him. "If the Pasha," said the Prince, "claims you and your tribe, as the property of his government, and sends me a request that I should not admit you into mine, I will burn his father, and laugh at his beard. The face of God's world is open to every one, and if man is ill-treated in one spot, he will take himself where better treatment is to be found." In short, we settled, and returned to our former habits and occupations.

'As the Prince had expected, so it happened. A very short time after our arrival an officer from the Pasha appeared at Kermanshah, bearing a letter making a formal demand that my father, with the whole of his tribe, should be sent back to his territory; and stating all the circumstances relative to our flight. My father was called a thief, and accused of having stolen a mare of immense value, which was described as the Pasha's property. The animal was demanded to be instantly restored; and in case it were not, threats were made that immediate reprisals on Persian property should ensue. The whole of these circumstances were made known to my father, and he was summoned forthwith to appear before the Prince.

'Consternation seized us as soon as this intelligence was known amongst us. It was evident that the Pasha was determined to leave nothing undone to regain possession of the mare, and to ruin my father; nor could it be supposed that a weak and poor tribe like ours was likely to withstand the intrigues, bribes, and machinations of so powerful a chief: besides, the possession of such a treasure would of itself be a crime in the eyes of the Persians, and they would certainly endeavour to get her from us, if not now, yet at some more favourable opportunity. It would soon be known that many of us were Yezedis, a circumstance of itself sufficient to excite the hatred and execration of every good sectary of Ali; and every probability existed, even supposing the mare to be out of the question, that we should be a prey to every sort of persecution as soon as time

enough should have passed over our heads for intrigue to have worked its effects.

‘ Before my father left us to attend the Prince’s summons, he had given secret orders that the mare should be put into some place of safety, in case he should be obliged to deny that he possessed her ; but on his return we found that such a precaution was unnecessary. He had been kindly received by the Prince, who had assured him that he was resolved not to accede to the Pasha’s demands in any one case ; that my father might enjoy the possession of his mare, and depend upon protection and security as long as he remained in his territory. His words were something to this purpose : “ Set your mind at ease, Okous Aga. As long as you remain under our shade you may lay your head on your pillow in full security. What does the Pasha mean by claiming you and your tribe as the subjects of his government ? The gates of the palace of my father, the Centre of the Universe and the King of Kings, are open to every one, and as soon as the stranger has touched the skirt of his robe he is safe. You have sought our protection, and we should not be Mussulmans if we refused it. Go, return to your tents, be happy, and leave the Pasha to us.”

‘ This produced great rejoicings amongst us ; and my father, to celebrate his success, gave a feast to the chiefs and elders of the tribe, where our present situation was fully discussed, and our plans for the future taken into consideration. Every one present was elated with the success that had attended our flight excepting one, and that was the old man, my father’s uncle. He had seen much of the Persians, having served under Nadir Shah when a youth, and nothing could induce him to put any faith in the promises and fair words of the Prince. “ You do not know the Persians,” said he, addressing himself to the assembly. “ You have never had any dealings with them, and therefore you permit yourselves to be lulled into security by their flattering expressions and their winning and amiable manners. But I have lived long with them, and have learned the value of what they say. Their weapons are not such as you have been accustomed to meet in the bold

encounter, and the open attack : instead of the sword and spear, theirs are treachery, deceit, falsehood ; and when you are the least prepared, you find yourselves caught as in a net : ruin and desolation surround when you think that you are seated on a bed of roses. Lying is their great, their national vice. Do you not remark that they confirm every word by an oath ? What is the use of oaths to men who speak the truth ? One man swears by your soul and by his own head, by your child, by the Prophet, by his relations and ancestors ; another swears by the Kebleh,¹ by the king, and by his beard ; a third by your death, by the salt he eats, by the death of Imâm Hossein. Do they care for any one of these things ? No, they feel all the time that they lie, and then out comes the oath. Now, in our case, is it to be supposed that we shall be left unmolested in the quiet possession of this mare, which has brought so much misfortune already on our heads ? The Persians are more wild, if possible, on the subject of horses than the Turks, and an Arabian mare in their sight is of greater value than diamonds and rubies. Should the Shah hear of the one we possess, he will instantly send for it, and what are we to do then ? Shall we continue in arms against all the world ? No, my friends. You may think what you please ; but, for my part, I look upon our situation as precarious, and advise you, as a general rule, not to put your trust in Persians, be they who or what they may."

'The event proved to be precisely what the old man had predicted, and was the cause of placing me where you now see me.

'One morning, about an hour before the dawn of day, we heard an unusual stir among the dogs of the camp ; they did not cease to bark and make a most furious noise. As we were accustomed to the attacks of wolves, who were kept at bay by our dogs, we did not at first pay attention to the disturbance ; but at length my father and his sons arose, and, taking their guns with them, went to see what could have happened. They had not proceeded twenty steps before they saw a

¹ The point towards which the Mohammedans turn in prayer.

horseman, and then a second, and shortly after several more ; in short, they discovered that their tents were surrounded. My father immediately gave the alarm, and instantly all the camp was in motion. The horsemen rushed on my father and attempted to seize him ; but he shot the first dead at his feet, and with his sword wounded the second. The report of the gun, and the noise of the fray, was a signal to the invaders for a general attack, and in a short time our camp was entered at every corner. Their principal object was evidently the mare ; for the women's tent was attacked first, and there they instantly seized the object of their search.

‘As the day dawned, we observed that our invaders were Persians, and we also soon discovered that they were acting from authority. My father had unluckily killed their chief, and that was a sufficient reason for our being made prisoners. Conceive our situation : it was a scene of misery that I shall never forget. My father was treated with every indignity before our eyes ; our property was pillaged, and——’

Zeenab was proceeding to relate to me how she became the property of Mirza Ahmak, when a loud knocking at the gate of the house was heard. We both got up in alarm. My fair one entreated me to take my departure by the terrace, while she went to see who it might be. By the voice that was ordering the door to be opened, she recognised the doctor himself, and, trusting to her own ingenuity for giving good reasons for the appearance of breakfast and good cheer, which he would perceive, she forthwith unbarred the gate and admitted him.

From the terrace I could watch all that was going on. The doctor appeared quite delighted to find Zeenab alone, and made her some speeches so full of tenderness, that there was no mistaking how his affections were placed. Looking into the window of his wife's apartment, he perceived the remains of the breakfast, and every appearance of the room having been occupied. He was asking some questions concerning what he saw, when in came the khanum herself, followed by her women. She entered the house so unexpectedly, that she appeared

before them ere they could separate. I shall never forget her look and attitude at this sight.

'*Salam, aleikum!* peace be unto ye!' said she with mock respect, 'I am your very humble servant. I hope that the health of both your excellencies is good, and that you have passed your time agreeably. I have arrived too soon, I fear.' Then the blood creeping into her face, she very soon relinquished her railery, and fell tooth and nail upon the unhappy culprits.

'And breakfast too—and in my room. *Mashallah! Mashallah!* It is understood, then, that I am become less than a dog; now that in my own house, on my own carpet, on my very pillow, my slaves give up their hearts to joy. *La Allah il Allah!* There is but one God! I am all astonishment! I am fallen from the heavens to the ground!'

Then addressing herself to her husband, she said, 'As for you, Mirza Ahmak, look at me, and tell me, by my soul, are you to be counted a man amongst men? A doctor too, the Locman of his day, a sage, with that monkey's face, with the goat's beard, with that humped back, to be playing the lover, the swain! Curses attend such a beard!' then putting up her five fingers to his face, she said, '*Poof!* I spit on such a face. Who am I, then, that you prefer an unclean slave to me? What have I done, that you should treat me with such indignity? When you had nothing but your prescriptions and your medicines in the world, I came, and made a man of you. You are become something, thanks to me! You now stand before a king:—men bow the head to you. You wear a Cashmerian shawl:—you are become a person of substance. Say, then, oh, you less than man! what is the meaning of all this?'

The doctor, during this attack upon him, was swearing abundance of oaths, and making ten thousands of exclamations, in proof of his innocence. Nothing, however, could stop the volubility of his wife, or calm her rage. By this time she had worked her passion up to such a pitch, that oath succeeded oath, and blasphemy blasphemy, in one raging, unceasing torrent. From her husband she fell on Zeenab, and from

Zeenab she returned again to her husband, until she foamed at the mouth. She was not satisfied with words alone, but seizing the wretched girl by one of the long tresses which hung down her back, she pulled it till she roared with pain; then, with the assistance of the other slaves, she was thrown into the reservoir, where they beat and soused her until both parties were nearly exhausted. Oh, how I burned to fly to her rescue! My body was become like glowing fire. I could have drunk the blood of the unfeeling wretches. But what could I do? Had I rushed into the harem, death would have been my lot; for most probably they would have impaled me on the spot: and what good would that have done to Zeenab? She would have been even more cruelly treated than before, and the doctor's wife would not have been the less jealous. So when the storm had subsided I quietly stepped down from my hiding-place on the terrace, and walked into the open country without the town, to consider upon the course which I ought to pursue. To remain with the doctor was out of the question; and to expect to enjoy Zeenab's company again was folly. My heart bled, when I reflected what might be the fate of that poor girl; for I had heard horrid stories of the iniquities performed in harems, and there was no length to which such a demon as the khanum might not go, with one so entirely in her power.

CHAPTER XXVII

OF THE PREPARATIONS MADE BY THE CHIEF PHYSICIAN TO RECEIVE THE SHAH AS HIS GUEST, AND OF THE GREAT EXPENSE WHICH THREATENED HIM

IN my walk I had almost determined to quit the doctor's house immediately, and abandon Tehran, such was the desperate view I took of my situation; but my love for Zeenab overcame this resolution; and in the hope of seeing her again, I continued to drag on a miserable existence as a dependant on Mirza Ahmak. He had no suspicion that I was his rival, and that I had been the cause of the late confusion in his harem; but he was aware that some one must have had access to it, and therefore took such precautions for the future, that I found great difficulty in discovering how it fared with my love, or what had been the consequences of the anger of the khanum. I daily watched the door of the *anderûn*, in the hope of seeing Zeenab in the suite of her mistress when she went out, but in vain: there was no indication of her, and my imagination made me apprehend either that she was kept in close confinement, or that she had fallen a victim to the violence of her enemies in the harem. My impatience had risen to the utmost, when I one day perceived that Nûr Jehan, the black slave, had issued from the house by herself, and was making her way to the bazaar. I followed her, and trusting to the friendship that she formerly entertained for the mistress of my heart, I ventured to accost her.

'Peace be with you, Nûr Jehan!' said I; 'where are you going in such haste by yourself?'—'May your kindness never

be less, Aga¹ Hajji,' answered she; 'I am bound to the druggist's for our Kûrdish slave.'

'What! Zeenab?' exclaimed I, in great agitation. 'What has befallen her? Is she sick?'

'Ah, poor thing,' replied the good negro girl, 'she has been sick and sorry too. You Persians are a wicked nation. We who are black, and slaves, have twice the heart that you have. You may talk of your hospitality, and of your kindness to strangers; but was there ever an animal, not to say a human creature, treated in the way that this poor stranger has been?'

'What have they done to her? For God's sake, tell me, Nûr Jehan!' said I; 'by my soul, tell me!'

Softened by my manner, and by the interest which I took in what she said, she informed me, that in consequence of the jealousy of her mistress, Zeenab had been confined to a small back room, whence she was prohibited stirring; that the treatment which she had received had occasioned a violent fever, which had brought her to the brink of the grave, but that her youth and strength had enabled her to overcome it: and now that she was quite recovered, her mistress began to relent, and had permitted her to use the khena and the surmeh,² which she was about to procure from the druggist. But she was sure that this indulgence would never have been granted, if the report had not been spread that it was the Shah's intention to pay Mirza Ahmak a visit; and as it is his privilege to enter every man's harem at pleasure, and to inspect his women unveiled; her mistress, who wanted to make as great a display of slaves and attendants as possible, had released Zeenab from the confinement of her room, in order that she should wait upon her: but she was still restricted to the walls of the secret chamber.

I was relieved by this intelligence, and began to turn in my mind how I could manage to obtain an interview; but such insurmountable obstacles did I foresee, that, fearful of entailing fresh miseries upon her, I determined to remain quiet for the

¹ *Aga* is used in the sense of *master*.

² The *surmeh* is a collyrium.

present, and to follow the poet's advice,—‘to fold up the carpet of my desires, and not to prowl round and round my inclination.’

In the meanwhile, the day of the Shah's departure for his usual summer campaign approached; and, according to custom, he passed the intermediate time in visiting the noblemen of his court, and thereby reaping for himself and his suite a harvest of presents, which every one who is distinguished by so great an honour is obliged to make.

Nûr Jehan's intelligence to me was true: the king had selected Mirza Ahmak as one of those to whom he intended the honour of a visit; for the doctor had the reputation of being rich, and he had long been marked as prey fit for the royal grasp. Accordingly, he was informed of the day when this new and special proof of favour would be conferred upon him; and as a most distinguishing mark of it, he was told, that it should not be an ordinary visit, but that the doctor should enjoy the satisfaction of entertaining his majesty: in short, the king would take his *shâm*, or dinner, at his house.

The doctor, half elated with the greatness of the distinction, half trembling at the ruin that awaited his finances, set to work to make all the necessary preparations. The first thing to be settled was the value and nature of the *pah-endaz*.¹ This he knew would be talked of throughout the country; and this was to be the standard of the favour in which he stood with his sovereign. His vanity was roused on the one hand, and his avarice alarmed on the other. If he exhibited too much wealth, he would remain a mark for future exactions; and if he made no display, his rivals in consequence would treat him with contempt. He had not deigned to consult me for a long time, and I had dwindled into a mere hanger-on; but recollecting the success which had attended my negotiation with the European doctor, he called me again into his counsels.

‘Hajji,’ said he, ‘what is to be done in this difficult case? I have received a hint that the king expects from me a con-

¹ The ceremony of the *pah-endaz* consists in spreading rich stuffs for the king to walk upon.

siderable pah-endaz, and this from the lord high treasurer himself, whose magnificence on such occasions is the theme of wonder throughout the whole of Persia. Now, it is impossible that I can rival him. He insisted, that I ought to spread broadcloth from the entrance of the street to where the king alights from his horse; that there he should tread upon cloth of gold, until he reached the entrance of the garden; and from thence, the whole length of the court to his seat, a carpet of Cashmerian shawls was to be extended, each shawl increasing in value, until the one upon the musnud, or carpet of state, which should be of an extraordinary price. Now, you know I am not the man to make such display: I am a hakîm, one of the learned: I make no profession of riches. Besides, 'tis plain that the lord high treasurer only says this, because he has cloth, brocades, and shawls to dispose of, which he wishes me to take off his hands. No, it is impossible that I can listen to his extravagant proposals. What then is to be done?'

I answered, 'Tis true you are a hakîm; but then you are the royal physician; you hold a situation of great consequence: besides, for the sake of the lady, your wife, you are bound to do something worthy of such an alliance. The king will be displeased if you do not receive him in a manner that will show your sense of the confidence he reposes in you.'

'Yes,' said the Mirza, 'and that may all be very true, friend Hajjî; still I am but a doctor, and cannot be supposed to have all these shawls, brocades, and stuffs by me whenever I want them.'

'But what can you do otherwise?' replied I; 'you would not strew the road with jalap, and spread his majesty's seat with a blister plaster?'

'No,' said he; 'but we might strew flowers, which, you know, are cheap; and perhaps we might sacrifice an ox, and break plenty of bottles full of sweetmeats under his horse's feet.—Would not that answer?'

'It is impossible,' exclaimed I; 'if you act thus, the Shah, and your enemies, will devise means to strip you as naked as my hand. Perhaps there is no necessity to do all the lord high

treasurer advises; but you might spread chintz in the street, velvet at the alighting spot, brocade in the court-yard, and shawls in the room; that will not be very expensive.'

'You do not say ill,' said the doctor. 'I might perhaps manage that. We have chintz in the house, which was intended for the women's trousers: that will probably do. A patient gave me a piece of Ispahan velvet the other day; I can sell my last dress of honour for some brocade; and two or three of my wife's shawls will suffice for the room.—By the blessing of Ali, that is settled.'

'Ah, but the harem!' exclaimed I; 'the Shah must go there. You know it brings good luck to be looked at by the king, and your women must appear well dressed on the occasion.'

'Oh, as for that,' said the doctor, 'they can borrow; they can borrow anything they like from their friends—jewels, trousers, jackets, shawls,—they can get whatever they want.'

Not so, said my lady the khanum. As soon as this arrangement was mentioned to her, she protested against it; she called her husband a low-born, niggardly carle; one unfit for the honour of possessing her for a wife; and insisted upon his conducting himself on this occasion in a manner worthy of the high distinction that was about to be conferred upon him. It was in vain to contend against her; and therefore the preparations were made upon a scale far exceeding what the doctor had intended; and every individual of his house appeared to be actuated by only one feeling, that of making him refund all that money which he so long and so unpitifully had extorted from others.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONCERNING THE MANNER OF THE SHAH'S RECEPTION: OF THE
PRESENT MADE HIM, AND THE CONVERSATION WHICH ENSUED

ON the morning of the day upon which this great event was to happen (a day which had been duly settled as auspicious by the astrologers), the note of preparation was heard throughout the whole of Mirza Ahmak's dwelling. The king's tent-pitchers had taken possession of the saloon of audience in which he was to hold his court, where they spread fresh carpets and prepared the royal musnud, covering it with a magnificent shawl. They threw water over the court-yard, set the fountains playing, and fitted on a new curtain to the front of the building. The king's gardeners also came and decked the premises with flowers. On the surface of the pool of water, immediately facing the spot where his majesty was to be seated, they spread rose leaves in curious devices. Around the marble basin they placed rows of oranges, and a general appearance of freshness and cheerfulness was given to the whole scene.

Then the cooks, a numerous and most despotic band, arrived with such accompaniments of pots, pans, braziers, and boilers, that the doctor, out of all patience, inquired of the head of the kitchen, 'what this meant; whether it was intended that he should feed all the city, as well as the king.' 'Not quite all,' was his answer; 'but perhaps you will recollect the words of Saadi:—

"If from the peasant's tree, the king an apple craves,
Down with it root and branch, exclaim his ready slaves;
And should he, in dainty mood, one single egg require,
Lo! thousand spitted birds revolve before the fire."

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They took possession of the kitchen, which did not contain one quarter of the space required for their operations, and consequently it was necessary to erect temporary fire-places in the adjoining court, where the braziers were placed, and in which was boiled the rice that is distributed on such occasions to all present. Besides the cooks, a body of confectioners established themselves in one of the apartments, where the sweetmeats, the sherbets, the ices, and the fruits were prepared; and they called for so many ingredients, that the doctor had nearly expired when the list was presented to him. In addition to all these, arrived the king's band of singers and musicians, and the Lûti Bashi (jester in chief), accompanied by twenty lûtis, each with a drum hanging over his shoulder.

The time appointed for the visit was after the evening's prayer, which is made at sunset. At that hour, when the heat of the day had partly subsided and the inhabitants of Tehran were about to enjoy the cool of the evening, the Shah left his palace, and proceeded to the doctor's house. The streets had been swept and watered; and as the royal cortege approached, flowers were strewn on the path. Mirza Ahmak himself had proceeded to the royal presence to announce that all was ready, and walked close to the king's stirrup during the cavalcade.

The procession was opened by the heralds, who, with the distinguishing club of office in their hands, and ornament on the head, proclaimed the king's approach, and marshalled every one on the road. The tops of the walls were occupied by women in their white veils, and in the better houses they were seen to be peeping through the holes made in the screens which surround their terraces. Then followed a great body of tent-pitchers and carpet-spreaders, with long slender sticks in their hands, keeping the road clear from intruders. After these walked a crowd of well-dressed officers of the stable, bearing rich embroidered saddle housings over their shoulders; then servants in the gayest attires, with gold pipes in their hands, the king's shoe-bearer, the king's ewer and basin-bearer,

the carrier of his cloak, the comptroller of the opium-box, and a number of other domestics. As this was only a private procession, his majesty was preceded by no led horses, which usually form so splendid a part of his grand displays. To these succeeded a train of running footmen, two and two, fantastically dressed, some with gold coins embroidered on their black velvet coats, others dressed in brocades, and others in silks: they immediately preceded the Shah in person, who was attended by the chief of the running footmen, a man of considerable consequence, known by the enamelled-handled whip stuck in his girdle. The king rode a quiet ambling horse, richly caparisoned; but his own dress was plain, and only distinguished by the beauty of the shawls and other materials of which it was composed. After him, at an interval of fifty paces, followed three of the king's sons, then the noble of nobles, the great master of the ceremonies, the master of the horse, the court poet, and many others, all attended by their servants: and at length when the whole party were collected together, who were to partake of Mirza Ahmak's substance, five hundred would probably be called a moderate number.

The king alighted at the gate, the entrance being too narrow to ride through; and proceeded up the centre walk of the court to the seat prepared for him in the great saloon. Every one, except the princes, stood without, and the doctor himself did the duties of a menial.

After his majesty had been seated some little time, the master of ceremonies, accompanied by the master of the house, walking barefooted, appeared near the reservoir, the latter holding up breast-high a silver salver, in which were spread one hundred tomauns of new coinage. The master of ceremonies then exclaimed, in a loud voice, 'The meanest of your majesty's slaves makes a humble representation to the Centre of the Universe, the King of Kings, the Shadow of God upon earth, that Mirza Ahmak, the king's chief physician, dares to approach the sacred dust of your majesty's feet, and to bring by way of an offering one hundred gold tomauns.'

To which the king answered, 'You are welcome, Mirza Ahmak. Praise be to God, you are a good servant. The Shah has a particular share of condescension for you; your face is whitened, your consequence has increased. Go, give praises to God, that the king has come to your house, and has accepted your present.'

Upon which the doctor knelt down and kissed the ground.

Then his majesty, turning to his noble of nobles, exclaimed, 'By the head of the Shah, Mirza Ahmak is a good man. There is no one like him now in Persia—he is wiser by far than Locman—more learned than Galen.'

'Yes, yes,' answered the noble of nobles: 'Locman indeed! whose dog was he, or Galen? This also comes from the happy star of the King of Kings. Such a king Persia before never saw, and such a doctor for such a king! Men may praise the doctors of Europe and of India, but where is science to be found, if it be not in Persia?—Who shall dare to claim a superiority, as long as the land of Persia is enlightened by the presence of its Shah without compare?'

'That's all true,' said the king. 'Persia is the country which, from the beginning of the world to the present day, has always been famous for the genius of its inhabitants, and the wisdom and splendour of its monarchs. From Kaiumars, the first king of the world, to me who am the present Shah, what list is so perfect, so glorious? India also had her sovereigns, Arabia her caliphs, Turkey her *Khon Khors* (lit. blood-drinkers), Tartary her khans, and China her emperors; but as for the Franks, who come into my dominions from God knows where, to buy and sell, and to bring me tribute of presents;—they, poor infidels! have a parcel of kings, of whose countries even the names have not reached our ears.'

'*Belli, belli*, Yes, yes!' said the nobleman, 'I am your sacrifice. Except the English and the French nations, which by all accounts are something in the world, all the others are but little better than nothing. As for the Muscovites, they are not Europeans—they are less than the dogs of Europe.'

'Ha! ha! ha! you say true,' answered the king, laughing.

'They had their *Khúrshíd Colah*,¹ their "Head of Glory," as they called her, who for a woman was a wonderful person, 'tis true—and we all know that when a woman meddles with any thing, *pena be khoda*, it is then time to put one's trust in God; but after her, they had a Paul, who was a pure madman; who, to give you an instance of what his folly was, wanted to march an army to India; just as if the *Kizzil Bashes*² would ever have allowed it. A Russian puts on a hat, a tight coat, and tight breeches, shaves his beard, and then calls himself a European. You might just as well tie the wings of a goose to your back and call yourself an angel.'

'Wonderful, wonderful,' exclaimed the head of the nobles; 'the Shah-in-Shah speaks like an angel. Show us a king in Europe that would speak like him.'

'Yes, yes,' was chorused by all the bystanders. 'May he live a thousand years,' said one. 'May his shadow never be less,' said another.

'But it is of their women,' continued the king, 'of whom we hear the most extraordinary accounts. In the first place, they have no *anderûn*³ in their houses; men and women all live together—then the women never wear veils—they show their faces to whoever chooses to look at them, like those of our wandering tribes. Tell me, Mirza Ahmak, you that are a doctor and a philosopher, by what extraordinary arrangement of Providence does it happen, that we Mussulmans should be the only people on earth who can depend upon our wives, and who can keep them in subjection. You,' said his majesty, smiling ironically, 'you I hear are blessed above all men in an obedient and dutiful wife.'

'Possessed of the kindness and protection of the King of Kings,' answered the doctor, 'I am blessed with everything that can make life happy. I, my wife, my family, are your humble slaves, and everything we have your property. If your

¹ Catherine II. is so styled by the Persians.

² *Kizzil Bash*, or Red Head, is a sort of nickname given from old times to the Persians.

³ The inner, or women's department.

slave possesses any merit, it is none of his; it all emanates from the asylum of the world; even my failings become virtues, when the king commands me. "But what lamp can shine in the face of the sun, or what minaret can be called high at the foot of the mountain of Alwend?" With respect to what your majesty has been pleased to say concerning women, it appears to the meanest of your slaves, that there must be a great affinity between beasts and Europeans, and which accounts for the inferiority of the latter to Mussulmans. Male and female beasts herd promiscuously together; so do the Europeans. The female beasts do not hide their faces; neither do the Europeans. They wash not, nor do they pray five times a day; neither do the Europeans. They live in friendship with swine; so do the Europeans; for instead of exterminating the unclean beast, as we do, I hear that every house in Europe has an apartment fitted up for its hog. Then as for their women indeed!—What dog seeing its female in the streets does not go and make himself agreeable?—so doubtless does the European. Wife in those unclean countries must be a word without a meaning, since every man's wife is every man's property.'

'Well said, doctor,' exclaimed the king; 'tis plain, then, that all are beasts but us. Our holy Prophet (upon whom be blessing and peace!) has told us as much. The infidel will never cease roasting, whilst the true believer will be eternally seated next to his houri in the seventh heaven! But we hear, doctor, that your Paradise has begun here on earth, and that you have got your houris already:—hah! how is that?'

Upon which Mirza Ahmak made a low prostration, and said, 'Whatever the monarch permits his slave to possess is the monarch's. The hour will be fortunate, and Mirza Ahmak's head will reach the skies, when the propitious step of the King of Kings shall pass the threshold of his unworthy anderûn.'

'We shall see with our own eyes,' rejoined the king; 'a look from the king brings good luck. Go, give notice to your harem that the Shah will visit it; and if there be any one sick—any one whose desires are unaccomplished—any maiden who sighs for her lover, or any wife who wishes to get rid of her husband,

—let them come forward, let them look at the king, and good fortune will attend them.'

Upon this the poet, who had hitherto remained silent, his mind apparently absorbed in thought, exclaimed, 'Whatever the king hath ordained is only an additional proof of his beneficence and condescension'; and then in very good verse he sang—

'The firmament possesses but one sun, and the land of Irāk but one king.

'Life, light, joy, and prosperity attend them both wherever they appear.

'The doctor may boast of his medicine; but what medicine is equal to a glance from the king's eye?

'What is *spikenard*? what *mumiai*¹? what *pahzer*? compared even to the twinkle of a royal eyelash!

'Oh! Mirza Ahmak, happiest of men, and most blessed of doctors!

'Now, indeed, you possess within your walls an antidote to every disorder, a specific against every evil.

'Shut up your Galen, burn your Hippocrates, and put your Avicenna in a corner: the father of them all is here in person.

'Who will take cassia when an eye is to be had, or will writhe under a blister when a look will relieve him?

'Oh! Mirza Ahmak, happiest of men, and most blessed of doctors!'

Every one present had kept the strictest silence when this was repeating, when the king exclaimed, '*Aferin*, this is well; you are indeed a poet, and worthy of our reign. Who was Ferdousi when compared to you? As for Mahmoud, the Ghaznevi, *hāk būd* (he was dirt). Go to him,' said he to the noble of nobles, 'go, kiss him on the mouth, and, when that is done, fill it with sugar-candy. Every pleasure should attend such a mouth, from whence such good things proceed.'

Upon which the noble of nobles, who was endowed with a large and bushy beard, approached the poet, and inflicted a

¹ *Mumiai* and *Pahzer* are antidotes in which the Persians have great faith. Our Bezoar is evidently a corruption of *Pahzer*.

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kiss upon his mouth, which also was protected by an appropriate quantity of hair; and then from a plate of sugar-candy, which was handed to him, he took as many lumps as would quite fill his jaws, and inserted them therein with his fingers with all due form.

Though evidently distressed with his felicity, the poet did his utmost to appear at the summit of all happiness, and grinned with such rare contortions, that involuntary tears flowed from his eyes as fast as the sugar-candy distilled through his lips.

The king then dismissed his courtiers, and attendants, and preparations were made for serving up the royal dinner.

CHAPTER XXIX

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTERTAINMENT, WHICH IS FOLLOWED
BY AN EVENT DESTRUCTIVE TO HAJJI BABA'S HAPPINESS

THE only persons, besides servants, admitted into the saloon where the Shah dined, were the three princes, his sons, who had accompanied him; and they stood at the farthest end, with their backs against the wall, attired in dresses of ceremony, with swords by their sides. Mirza Ahmak remained in attendance without. A cloth, of the finest Cashmerian shawl fringed with gold, was then spread on the carpet before the king, by the chief of the valets, and a gold ewer and basin were presented for washing hands. The dinner was then brought in trays, which, as a precaution against poison, had been sealed with the signet of the head steward before they left the kitchen, and were broken open by him again in the presence of the Shah. Here were displayed all the refinements of cookery: rice, in various shapes, smoked upon the board; first, the chilau, as white as snow; then the pilau, with a piece of boiled lamb, smothered in the rice; then another pilau, with a baked fowl in it; a fourth, coloured with saffron, mixed up with dried peas; and at length, the king of Persian dishes, the narinj pilau, made with slips of orange-peel, spices of all sorts, almonds, and sugar: salmon and herring, from the Caspian Sea, were seen among the dishes; and trout from the river Zengf, near Erivan; then in china basins and bowls of different sizes were the ragouts, which consisted of hash made of a fowl boiled to rags, stewed up with rice, sweet herbs, and onions; a stew, in which was a lamb's marrow-bone, with some loose flesh about it, and boiled in its own juice; small gourds, crammed with force-meat, and done in butter; a fowl stewed to rags, with a brown sauce

of prunes; a large omelette, about two inches thick; a cup full of the essence of meat, mixed up with rags of lamb, almonds, prunes, and tamarinds, which was poured upon the top of the chilau; a plate of poached eggs, fried in sugar and butter; a dish of badenjâns, slit in the middle and boiled in grease; a stew of venison; and a great variety of other messes too numerous to mention. After these came the roasts. A lamb was served up hot from the spit, the tail of which, like marrow, was curled up over its back. Partridges, and what is looked upon as the rarest delicacy in Persia, two capk dereh, partridges of the valley, were procured on the occasion. Pheasants from Mazanderan were there also, as well as some of the choicest bits of the wild ass and antelope. The display and the abundance of delicacies surprised every one; and they were piled up in such profusion around the king, that he seemed almost to form a part of the heap. I do not mention the innumerable little accessories of preserves, pickles, cheese, butter, onions, celery, salt, pepper, sweets, and sours, which were to be found in different parts of the tray, for that would be tedious: but the sherbets were worthy of notice, from their peculiar delicacy: these were contained in immense bowls of the most costly china, and drunk by the help of spoons of the most exquisite workmanship, made of the pear-tree. They consisted of the common lemonade, made with superior art; of the sekenjebîn or vinegar, sugar, and water, so mixed that the sour and the sweet were as equally balanced, as the blessings and miseries of life; the sherbet of sugar and water, with rose-water to give it a perfume, and sweet seeds to increase its flavour; and that made of the pomegranate; all highly cooled by lumps of floating ice.

The king then, doubling himself down with his head reclining towards his food, buried his hand in the pilaus and other dishes before him, and ate in silence, whilst the princes and the servants-in-waiting, in attitudes of respect, remained immovable. When he had finished he got up, and walked into an adjoining room, where he washed his hands, drank his coffee, and smoked his water-pipe.

In the course of his eating he ordered one of the pilaus, of which he had partaken, to be carried to Mirza Ahmak, his host, by a servant-in-waiting. As this is considered a mark of peculiar honour, the Mirza was obliged to give a present in money to the bearer. A similar distinction was conferred upon the poet for his impromptu, and he also made a suitable present. His majesty also sent one of the messes, of which he had freely partaken, to the doctor's wife, who liberally rewarded the bearer. And in this manner he contrived to reward two persons, the one who received the present, and the other who bore it.

The princes then sat down, and when they had eaten their fill they rose, and the dishes were served up in another room, where the noble of nobles, the court poet, the master of the horse, and all the officers of state and courtiers, who had attended his majesty, were seated, and who continued the feast which the king and his sons had begun. After this, the dinner was taken in succession to the different servants, until the dishes were cleared by the tent-pitchers and scullions.

In the meanwhile the Shah had been introduced into the harem by the doctor in person; and as immediate death would have been inflicted upon any one who might have been caught peeping, I waited in the greatest suspense until I could learn what might have taken place there; but what was my horror! what my consternation! on hearing (as soon as the king had returned to the great saloon), that the doctor had made a present of the Kûrdish slave to his majesty! At this intelligence I grew sick with apprehension; and, although there was every reason to rejoice at her leaving her present situation, yet there were consequences which I anticipated,—consequences which might even ultimately affect her life, at the very thought of which my blood ran cold. We had been too much enamoured to listen to the dictates of prudence, and now the future opened a prospect to me, the background of which was darkened by images the most horrible that the imagination can conceive.

'I will endeavour,' thought I, 'to gain some certain intelligence of what has happened; perhaps in the confusion I may

chance to get a sight of Zeenab herself.' I lost no time, therefore, in resorting to our old place of meeting on the terrace. Much noise and clatter were heard below amongst the women, a large number having come as visitors, in addition to those which composed the doctor's harem; but I could perceive no one amongst them that looked at all like her I sought; indeed, the night had closed in, and I despaired of making any sign which might be recognised; but, trusting to the sympathies of love, I thought it certain that she would hit upon precisely the same plan which I had devised to see her. Part of the terrace where our first interview had taken place was situated near the street, and upon this the women of the harem were accustomed to take their station whenever anything remarkable was to be seen abroad. Here I hoped Zeenab would not fail to come at the moment of the Shah's departure, which was now close at hand. The clatter of the horses, the shouts of men, the passing to and fro of lanterns, all announced the close of the scene; and to my delight I heard a corresponding shuffling of women's slippers and voices making for the steps of the terrace. I had placed myself behind the wall, so as to be seen by those only who had a knowledge of the premises, and I flattered myself that Zeenab, by a natural impulse, would turn her eyes towards me. I was not mistaken. She was among the women who had ascended the terrace, and she recognised me. That was all I wanted, and I left it to her ingenuity to devise a mode of conversing with me.

The cry of *Gitchin!* Begone! made by the heralds whenever the king rises to depart, was now heard, and every one arranged himself in the procession. With the exception of the numerous lanterns, which by their size announced the dignity of the different personages whose steps they lighted, the ceremony of the king's return to his palace was the same as on his leaving it, and with his majesty departed all that had a moment before given life and animation to the place.

The women, satisfied that nothing more was to be seen, also left the terrace. Their conversation, during the time of their stay, had consisted almost entirely of disputes of who had been

most seen and admired by the Shah; and, as they were descending, I overheard great expressions of envy and jealousy at the good fortune which, in their eyes, had fallen to the share of Zeenab.

'I can't conceive,' said one, 'what the Shah could have seen so attractive in her. After all, she has no beauty. Did you ever see so large a mouth? She has no salt in her complexion.'

'She is crooked,' said another.

'As for her waist,' said a third, ''tis like that of an elephant; and then her feet,—a camel has smaller.'

'And then,' said a fourth, 'she is a Yezeedi. She must have got a charm from the Shaitan himself, to make herself remarked.' 'That is the truth,' they all exclaimed: 'Yes, that's it—she and the devil are in partnership to make the king eat dirt.' Upon this they all seemed satisfied, and I heard no more of them.

But one woman still remained behind on the terrace apparently engrossed with what was passing on in the street; she immediately rose when the others had left it, and came towards me. It was Zeenab.

CHAPTER XXX

HAJÍ BABA MEETS WITH A RIVAL IN THE SHAH HIMSELF,
AND LOSES THE FAIR OBJECT OF HIS AFFECTIONS

THE wall behind which I had taken post was not long a barrier between us, and I had scarcely made known to her the unhappy state of my mind, before she apprised me of the danger that we incurred in such an interview. She soon gave me to understand that this must be our last meeting: for, as she now belonged to the royal harem, death would be our fate if we were found together. I was anxious to hear in what manner the king had gained possession of her, and what was to be her future destiny; but sobs stifled everything I had to say. She, on the other hand, did not appear to take our separation quite so much to heart; for, whether dazzled by the prospect of her future destinies, or subdued by the miseries she had already endured on my account, certainly I did not meet that return to my affection which I had so warmly anticipated.

She informed me, that when the Shah entered the *anderún*, he was received by a band of female singers, who went before, singing his praises, to the accompaniment of tambourines; and, as soon as he had seated himself in the open saloon, the *khanum* was permitted to enjoy the privilege of kissing his knee. A *pah-endaz*, composed of embroidered silks, had been spread for him, which, as soon as the royal footsteps had passed over, was snapped up by the eunuchs, who shared it as their perquisite. The king's female master of the ceremonies was in attendance, and she made an offering of the *khanum's* present, which was laid out on a silver tray, and consisted of six *arac gîrs*, or skull caps, embroidered by that lady's own hands; six *sineh gîrs*, or breast covers, made of padded shawl, worn in cold weather over

the shirt; two pair of trousers of Cashmerian shawl; three silk shirts, and six pair of stockings, knitted by the women of the doctor's house. His majesty having accepted this, with many encomiums on the khanum's industry and skill, the women were marshalled in two lines on each side of him; 'and I,' said Zeenab, 'in order that every mortification possible might be heaped upon me, was placed the last in the row, even below Nûr Jehan, the black slave. You ought to have seen the pains which all of us, even old Leilah, took to attract the Shah's attention: some were bashful, others stole wicked looks and glanced sideways; others, again, were bold, and kept their eyes fixed on the king's face. Having inspected each in turn, he paused, and keeping his eyes riveted upon me, turned to the doctor, and said, "What sort of thing is this? she is no indifferent commodity. By the king's *Jika*,¹ the animal is fine! Doctor, mashallah! you have a good taste,—the moon face, the stag eye, the cypress waist, everything is here."

'Upon which, the doctor, making the lowest obeisance, said, "May I be your sacrifice, notwithstanding the slave is totally unworthy of notice; yet, since I and everything that belongs to me is the property of the King of Kings, may I venture to place her as an offering at the foot of your majesty's throne?"

"*Caboul!* I accept her," said the Shah; and then calling the chief eunuch to him, he ordered that I should be educated for a baziger (dancer or singer), that all my clothes, etc., should be made suited to my future profession, and that I should be ready accomplished to appear before him upon his return from his summer campaign.

'Oh! I shall never forget,' exclaimed Zeenab, 'the looks of the doctor's wife when this conversation was passing; she turned towards the Shah in great humility, acquiescing in all that was said, and then cast glances upon me, which spoke the thousand angry passions by which her breast was agitated. As for the Georgian she looked daggers and arsenic, whilst Nûr Jehan's good-humoured face was lightened up with every

¹ The *Jika* is an upright ornament worn in front of the crown, and is an insignia of royalty.

expression of happiness at my good fortune. I, in the meanwhile, prostrated myself to the ground before the king, who still kept surveying me with a kind aspect.

‘As soon as his majesty was gone, you ought to have seen the immediate change which took place in the khanum’s conduct towards me. I was no longer “a child of the devil,” “a maiden accursed”; but it was “my love, my soul, light of my eyes, my child.” I, who had never smoked before her, was now invited to partake of her own pipe; and whether I would or not, she thrust bits of sweetmeat into my mouth with her own fingers. As for the Georgian, she could not stand the sight, but withdrew to another place, to digest her envy as she might. I received the congratulations of the other women, who did not cease repeating a long list of delights that were preparing for me. Love, wine, music, jewels, fine clothes, bathing, and standing before the king, were to be my future occupations. Some talked to me of the best spells to secure love, and to destroy the influence of rivals; others gave me the best advice how to get presents of finery; and many again began to teach me the forms of speech and compliment which I must use in case the Shah spoke to me. In short, poor Zeenab, the most miserable and neglected of human beings, all of a sudden found herself the object of universal attention and admiration.’

Zeenab here finished talking, and the joy which she seemed to feel for the change which was about to take place in her situation was so natural, that I could not find in my heart to destroy it by communicating to her my forebodings of the danger which awaited her. She little knew the horrible penalty she would incur, in case, when called upon to attend the Shah, she should be found unworthy of his attentions; for it was upon record, under such circumstances, that death, a horrid, cruel death, had been inflicted, and that without appeal to any tribunal upon earth. I therefore seemed to partake her happiness, and although we felt we must be separated, yet we were consoled with the hope that opportunities of mutual intelligence would not be waiting.

She told me that one of the king's eunuchs was to call on the following morning, to conduct her to the seraglio, and, when bathed and newly dressed, she was to be delivered over to the department of the bazigers, when her education was immediately to commence.

Hearing her name repeatedly called, she was afraid of risking herself longer with me, and after ten thousands and thousands protestations of mutual love, we parted, perhaps to meet no more.

CHAPTER XXXI

HIS REFLECTIONS ON THE LOSS OF ZEENAB.—HE IS SUDDENLY
CALLED UPON TO EXERT HIS SKILL AS A DOCTOR

As soon as she was gone I sat down on the same spot where we had been standing, and gave myself up to thought. 'So,' said I to myself, 'so, this is being two kernels in one almond? Well, if such be the world, then what I have been taken up with for these two last months is only a dream. I thought myself a Majnoun, and she a Leilah, and as long as the sun and moon endured we should go on loving, and getting thin, and burning like charcoal, and making kabob¹ of our hearts. But 'tis clear that my beard has been laughed at. The Shah came, looked, said two words, and all was over. Hajji was forgotten in an instant, and Zeenab took upon herself the airs of royalty. Be it so: there are plenty of women besides in the world; but the best of it is, that Hajji has eaten the sweetmeat, whilst the Shah only gets the paper it was wrapped up in.'

I passed a feverish night, and rose early in the morning, full of new projects. In order to reflect more at my ease, I determined to take a walk without the city walls, but just as I had stepped from the house, I met Zeenab mounted on a horse, finely caparisoned, conducted by one of the royal eunuchs, and escorted by servants making way for her to pass. I expected that at the sight of me she would have lifted up the flap of her veil; but no, she did not even move from her perpendicular on the saddle, and I walked on, more determined than ever to drive her from my recollection. But somehow or other, instead of taking my path to the gate of the city, I

¹ Roast meat.

followed her, and was led on imperceptibly towards the king's palace.

Entering the great square, which is situated immediately before the principal gate, I found it filled with cavalry, passing muster, or the *soum*, as it is called, before the Shah in person, who was seated in the upper room over the porch. I lost Zeenab and her conductor in the crowd, who were permitted to pass, whilst I was kept back by the guards. The current of my thoughts was soon arrested by the scene carrying on before me. The troops now under examination consisted of a body of cavalry under the command of Namerd Khan, the chief executioner, who was present, mounted on a superb charger, dressed in cloth of gold, with the enamelled ornament on his head glittering in the sun. The review was quite new to me; and as I gazed upon the horses and the horsemen, the spears and the muskets, the days which I had passed among the Turcomans came again to my mind, and I longed once more to be engaged in active life. The troops to be reviewed were stationed on one side of the square. The secretary at war with his six scribes were placed in the middle, taken up with their different registers: two criers were also present, the one who, with a loud voice, called out the name of the soldier, and the other answering *hazir* (present) as soon as he had passed muster. Whenever a name was called, a cavalier, completely equipped, dashed from the condensed body, and crossed the square at the full speed of his horse, making a low obeisance as he passed the Shah; and this ceremony was performed by each man until the whole was reviewed. Many and various was the appearance of the horsemen. Some came forwards in fine style, looking like Rustams, whilst others, who had perhaps borrowed a beast for the occasion, went hobbling through as if the day of battle had already taken place. I recognised many of my acquaintance as they galloped by, and was admiring the animated manner of a young man, who had urged his horse forwards, when, by some fatal accident, the beast fell just as they were about passing the high pole which is erected in the middle of the course, and its rider was thrown with great violence against the foot of it. He

was immediately taken up and carried through the crowd. Some one, recognising me to belong to the Shah's physician, invited me to take charge of him, and, without the least apprehension from my ignorance, I did not hesitate to put on the airs of a doctor. I found the unfortunate man stretched on the ground apparently without life. Those who surrounded him had already prescribed largely. One was pouring water down his throat, 'in the name of the blessed Hossein'; another was smoking a pipe up his nose in order to awaken him; and a third was kneading his body and limbs, to promote circulation. As soon as I appeared, these different operations were suspended, and, room being made, I felt his pulse with great solemnity, and as the surrounding uplifted faces seemed to solicit a decision, I declared, with emphasis, that he had been struck by fate, and that life and death were now wrestling with each other who should have him. Thus (according to the practice of my master) having prepared my hearers for the worst, I ordered, as a preliminary to other remedies, that the patient should be well shaken, in order to discover if life was in him or no. No prescription was ever better administered, for the crowd almost shook him to dislocation. This had no effect. I was about prescribing again, when a cry was heard in the crowd, *Rah bedeh, give way: Ser hisab, heads, heads!* and the Frank doctor (of whose skill I have before given some account) made his appearance, having been sent by his ambassador, who had witnessed the catastrophe. Without having seen the patient, he cried out, 'Take blood instantly! you must not lose a moment.'

I, who now felt myself called upon to assert the dignity of the Persian faculty, and give proofs of my superior wisdom, said, 'Take blood! what doctrine is this? Do not you know that death is cold, and that blood is hot, and that the first principle of the art is to apply warm remedies to cold diseases? Pocrat,¹ who is the father of all doctors, has thus ordained, and surely you cannot say that he eats his own soil. If you take blood from that body, it dies; and go tell the world that I say so.'

¹ So Hippocrates is called in Persia.

‘As for that,’ said the Frank, who had now examined it, ‘we may save ourselves any further trouble; it is dead already, and hot and cold are now all one.’ Upon this he took his leave, and left me and my Pocrat with our noses in the air.

‘Then death,’ said I, ‘has had the best of it; the wisdom of man is unavailing, when opposed to the decrees of God. We doctors can no more contend with destiny, than the waters of an aqueduct can overcome those of a river.’

A Mollah, who was present, ordered his feet to be turned towards the Kebleh, his two great toes to be tied together, a handkerchief wrapped under his chin, and fastened over his head, and then all the bystanders after him repeated aloud the profession of the true faith. By this time some of his relatives had gathered round him, and had begun the usual lamentations, when the bier was brought, and the dead body conveyed to his family.

Upon inquiry I found that the deceased had been a *nasakchi*, *i.e.* one of the officers attached to the chief executioner, who has one hundred and fifty such under his command, and whose duties consist in preceding the Shah in his marches, dispersing crowds, maintaining order, taking charge of state prisoners, and, in short, acting as police officers, throughout the country. It immediately struck me, how agreeable and how convenient it would be to step into the dead man’s shoes, and how much better my temper and disposition were suited to filling such an office than mixing drugs and visiting the sick. In turning over in my mind the possibility of acquiring this situation, I recollected that the chief executioner was a great friend of Mirza Ahmak, and under considerable obligations to him; for, but a few days since, he had persuaded the doctor to swear to the Shah, that wine, which is strictly prohibited at court, was absolutely necessary for his health, and that in consequence he had received a dispensation from the head of the law to drink it—a privilege, in which he indulged to the greatest excess. I therefore determined to interest the Mirza in my favour, and, if possible, to turn the waters of bitterness, which the fountain of fate had been pouring into the cup of the deceased, into streams of sweet sherbet for myself.

CHAPTER XXXII

HAJJI IS APPOINTED TO A SITUATION UNDER GOVERNMENT ;
HE BECOMES AN EXECUTIONER

I WATCHED an opportunity before the doctor set out the next morning for the Der-Khonch,¹ to speak upon my future plans, and request him to lose no time in asking for me the place of the deceased nasakchi from the chief executioner. I urged the necessity of acting immediately; for as the Shah would leave the capital for his camp at Sultanieh, in the course of a few days, and as the doctor would be called upon to accompany him, it was plain, if he did not in some manner provide for me, I should be left upon his hands.

The doctor, who was still calculating the expenses of his entertainment to the Shah, and had resolved upon adopting a system of more rigid economy in his household, was not sorry to lose an hungry hanger-on, and without hesitation he promised to assist me. It was agreed between us, that he would forthwith call upon the chief executioner, and appointed me to meet him at court, after the morning's Selam (levee) was over. As soon, therefore, as the mid-day prayer had been announced from the mosque, I went to the palace, and took my station without the room which is appropriated for the use of the head executioner, and which is situated with its large window immediately facing the principal gate. Several persons were collected there. He himself was taken up with saying his prayers in a corner, and apparently completely abstracted from a conversation that was carrying on between my friend the poet laureate and the under-master of ceremonies.

¹ The gate of the palace, where public business is transacted.

The latter was describing to the former the death of the unfortunate nasakchi, and was mixing a considerable portion of the marvellous in his narrative, when the chief executioner, from the middle of his devotions, cried out, '*Een derough est,*'—'that's a lie—have patience, and I will tell you how it was,' and then went on with his holy invocations. As soon as they were over, and almost before he had finished his last prostration, he begun his story, relating the fact with infinitely more exaggeration than the master of the ceremonies had done, and finishing by a round assertion, that the Frank had bled the poor man to death, after the Persian doctor had brought him to life only by shaking him.

During the chief executioner's narration, Mirza Ahmak entered the room, and far from denying what was asserted of the two doctors, he confirmed it the more by new and stronger circumstances, and then finished by pointing to me, and said, 'This is he who would have saved the nasakchi's life, if he had not been prevented.' Upon this, the eyes of all present were turned upon me, and I was called upon to relate the whole circumstance as it had happened, which I did, making my version coincide as nearly as possible with what had been already related; but giving all the merit of the science which I had displayed to the tuition of the chief physician. Mirza Ahmak, elated by my praise, was full of zeal to serve me, and he then introduced me to the chief executioner as a man fit and willing to undertake the office of the deceased nasakchi.

'How!' said the head of the nasakchies, 'a doctor become an executioner! how can that be?'

'There is no harm in that,' said the poet (looking at the doctor through the corner of his eye)—'they are both in the same line—the one does his business with more certainty than the other, that's true; but after all, it signifies little whether a man dies gradually by a pill, or at once by a stroke of the scimitar.'

'As for that,' retorted Mirza Ahmak, 'to judge of others by you, poets are in the same line too; for they murder men's reputations; and everybody will agree with me, that that is a

worse sort of killing than the doctor's (as you are pleased to say), or the nasakchi's.'

'That's all very well,' exclaimed the chief executioner; 'you may kill in any manner you choose, provided you leave me the soldier's manner. Give me good hard fighting—let me have my thrust with the lance, and my cut with the sabre, and I want nothing more—let me snuff up the smell of gunpowder, and I leave the scent of the rose to you, Mr. Poet—give me but the roar of cannon, and I shall never envy you the song of the nightingale.—We all have our weaknesses—these are mine.'

'Yes,' said the master of ceremonies, addressing himself to the whole assembly; 'everybody knows your several merits. The Shah particularly (who by-the-by has studied the art of killing as well as any of you) is frequently expressing his delight, that of all the monarchs which Persia ever had, he is the best served; and with that feeling, he talks of carrying his arms into the very heart of Georgia. If the Russians once hear that you are going amongst them,' addressing himself to the chief executioner, 'they may begin to make their accounts clear in this world, and prepare for the next.'

'What are the Russians?' said the executioner, with half a shrug and half a shiver; 'they are dust—they are nothing—the possession of Georgia by the Russians is to Persia what a flea which has got into my shirt is to me: it teases me now and then, but if I gave myself the least trouble, I would hunt it out in a minute. The Russians are nothing.' Then, as if he were anxious to waive the subject, he turned to me, and said: 'Well, I agree to take you into the service, provided you are as fond of the smell of powder as I am. A nasakchi must have the strength of a Rustam, the heart of a lion, and the activity of a tiger.' Then looking at me from head to foot, he seemed pleased with my appearance, and forthwith ordered me to go to his naib, or lieutenant, who would equip me for my office, and give me instructions respecting the duties which I should have to perform.

I found the naib in the midst of preparations for the de-

parture of the Shah, giving his orders, and receiving the reports of those under his command. As soon as he was informed that I was the man appointed to succeed the deceased officer, he put me in possession of his horse and its accoutrements, gave me strict injunctions to take the greatest care of it, and informed me that I could not be provided with another unless I brought back its tail and the mark peculiar to the royal horses, which is burnt on its flank. My stipend was fixed at thirty tomauns per annum, with food for myself and horse. I found myself in dress and arms, except a small hatchet, which indicated my office, and which was provided by the government.

But before I proceed further, it is necessary that I make my reader acquainted with the person and character of Namerd Khan, my new master. He was a tall, square-shouldered, bony man, about forty-five years of age—young enough to be still called a *khûb jûan* (a fine youth). The features of his face were cast in a deep mould, and shaded by black and thick eyebrows, as well as by a jet black beard and mustachios. His hand was particularly large and muscular; and from the black hairs that curled out from the crevices of his shirt, it was evident that his fur was of the thickest quality. Altogether, he was of a figure commanding, but coarse, and looked his office greatly to the advantage of the peace of the city, for the very sight of him was sufficient to awe the evil-minded. He was the most celebrated *khôsh guzerân* (sensualist) in Tehran. He drank wine without compunction, and freely cursed the mollahs, who promised him a seat in the regions below for holding the injunctions of the Prophet so cheap. His house was the seat of revelry; the noise of singing and tambours was heard there from night till morning. He kept men dancers and women dancers; and was the protector of every *Luti*,¹ however impudent and obscene he might be. But with all this, he did not in the least relax in the severities of his office; and one might frequently hear, amid the sounds of revelry, the cries and groans of some unfortunate wretch

¹ *Luti* here is used in the sense of *polisson*.

who was writhing under the torture of the bastinado on his feet. He was an excellent horseman, and very dexterous at the spear exercise; and although there was everything in his appearance to make one believe that he was a soldier and a man of prowess, yet in fact he was a most arrant coward. He endeavoured to conceal this defect of his nature by boasting and big words; and succeeded in persuading those who did not know his real character, that he was among the modern Persians, what Sām and Afrasiāb¹ were among the ancient.

His lieutenant, a man of stern aspect, was an active and intelligent officer: he understood the management of his chief, whom he flattered into a belief, that, besides the Shah and himself, no one was worthy to be called a man in Persia. I soon discovered that his prevailing passion was avarice; for when he found that I was to be installed in my office without making him a present, there was no end to the difficulties which he threw in my way. However, by dint of making use of that tongue which nature had given me, and persuading him in his turn, that he was the cream of lieutenants, and the very best of materials for the future executioner in chief, he relaxed in his dislike, and even flattered me so much as to say, that, 'by the blessing of Allah, the benign and the merciful, he believed that I should not fail to become in time an ornament to the profession.'

I still kept my lodging at the doctor's house until the period of the Shah's departure, and filled up my time in preparing for the journey. The very circumstance of being a *nasakchi* gave me consequence in the bazaar, and I found no difficulty in procuring everything I wanted upon credit. During my stay with the doctor, I had managed to set myself up with a small capital of necessaries, which I procured either in presents from patients, or by happy contrivances of my own. As for instance, I wanted a bed, a quilt, and a pillow: a poor man happened to die under our charge, I assured his relations, whom I knew to be the most bigoted of Mussulmans, that

¹ Celebrated heroes in the *Shahnameh*, a book which is believed, by the present Persians, to contain their ancient history.

his death could be no fault of ours, for no one could doubt the skill with which he had been treated, but that the bed upon which he lay must be unfortunate; for in the first place, the quilt was of silk;¹ and in the next, the foot of the bed had not been turned towards the kebleh,² as it ought to have been: this was enough for the family to discard the bed, and it became mine.

A looking-glass was necessary to my toilet: a mirza, sick of the jaundice, looked at himself in one which he possessed, and was horror-struck at his colour. I assured him that it only proceeded from a defect in the glass, for that in fact he was as fresh as a rose. He threw it away, and I took it home with me.

No one was stricter than Mirza Ahmak himself in all the exteriors of religion, and scrupulous to a fault about things forbidden as unclean. I was in want of a pair of yakhdans, or trunks, and a pair belonging to the doctor, which were lying idle in an unfrequented room, were frequently the objects of my contemplation. How shall I manage to become master of these? thought I: had I but half the invention of Dervish Sefer, I should already have been packing up my things in them. A thought struck me: one of the many curs, which range wild throughout Tehran, had just pupped under a ruined archway, close to our house. Unseen, I contrived to lodge the whole litter within one of the trunks, and to make a deposit of old bones in the other. When they came to be moved, preparatory to the doctor's journey (for he always accompanies the Shah), the puppies and their mother set up such a confusion of yells, that the servant who had disturbed them ran breathless with the information to the doctor, who, followed by his household, including myself, proceeded to the spot. As soon as the state of the case had been ascertained, many were struck by the singularity of the circumstance, as an omen portending no good to the doctor's house. One said, 'This comes of marrying the khanum; she will give him

¹ Strict Mussulmans hold silk unclean.

² In the direction of Mecca.

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a houseful of harâm zadehs.¹ Another said, 'The puppies are yet blind: God grant that we and the doctor may not become so likewise!' The doctor himself was only vexed by the loss of his trunks; he pronounced them to be nejes (unclean) from that moment, and ordered them, puppies, bitch and all, immediately to be expelled. I was not long in appropriating them; and very soon assumed all the consequence of a man possessing trunks, which also implied things worthy to be put into them. Little by little, I scraped together a sufficient quantity of effects to be able to talk big about my baggage; and when preparations for our departure were making, I held myself entitled to the privilege of squabbling with the king's mule-drivers concerning the necessity of a mule for carrying it.

¹ Illegitimate born.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HE ACCOMPANIES THE SHAH TO HIS CAMP, AND GETS SOME
INSIGHT INTO HIS PROFESSION

At length the day of departure for Sultanieh was fixed by the astrologers. The Shah left his palace just half an hour before sunrise, on the 21st *Rebbi*¹ *el evel*, and travelled without drawing bridle, until he reached his palace of Sulimanieh, which is situated on the banks of the Caraj, at a distance of nine parasangs from Tehran. The different corps composing the army to be collected at Sultanieh were ordered to meet there at a given time, whilst the Shah's escort was to consist only of his body-guard, his camel artillery, and a heavy squadron of cavalry. The great officers of the court, with the viziers, and those employed in the public offices, departed at about the same time, and thus the city was bereft, almost in one day, of nearly two-thirds of its population. Everything and everybody were in motion; and a stranger would have thought that all the inhabitants, like bees hiving, by one common consent had broken up housekeeping, and were about to settle in some other place. Strings of mules and camels, laden with beds, carpets, cooking utensils, tents, horse furniture, and provisions of all sorts, were seen making their way through each avenue, raising an impenetrable dust, whilst their conductors mingled their cries with the various-toned bells which decked their beasts.

On the morning of departure, I was stationed at the Casbin gate to keep order, and to prevent any impediment to the Shah's passage. The peasants bringing provisions to the city, who are in waiting every day previously to opening the gates,

¹ The third month in the Arabic calendar.

were ordered to take another direction. The road was watered by all the sakas of the town, and every precaution taken to make the royal exit as propitious as possible. In particular, no old woman was permitted to be seen, lest the Shah might cast a look upon her, and thus get a stroke of the evil eye.

I found within myself an energy and a vigour in driving the people about, that I never thought appertained to my character; for I recollected well, when one of the mob, how entirely I abominated every man in office. I made use of my stick so freely upon the heads and backs of the crowd, that my brother executioners quite stared, and wondered what demon they had got amongst them. I was anxious to establish a reputation for courage, which I expected would in time promote me to a higher situation.

At length the procession began to move forwards. A detachment of camel artillery had proceeded on the evening before to receive the Shah when he should alight at Sulimanieh; and now was heard the salute which announced his leaving the palace at Tehran. All was hushed into anxiety and expectation. The chief executioner himself, mounted upon a superb charger, galloped through the streets in haste; and horsemen were seen running to and fro, all intent upon the one object of preparing the road. First came the heralds; then the led horses, magnificently caparisoned in jewellery, shawls, and cloth of gold; after them the running footmen; then the Shah in person; the princes succeeded, followed by the viziers; and last of all an immense body of cavalry.

When it is mentioned that every man of any consequence was accompanied by his train of attendants, most of whom had also their trains; and when the sum total of mirzas, of servants, of pipe-bearers, of cooks and scullions, of carpet-spreaders, of running-footmen, of grooms and horses, of mule drivers and camel drivers, and of ten thousand other camp followers is reckoned up, the imagination may perhaps conceive what was the crowd which passed before me in succession, as I stood at the Casbîn gate. When the Shah approached, his long beard floating to his girdle, with all the terrors of

despotism concentrated in his person, I could not help feeling an odd sort of sensation about my neck; and I made my lowest prostration to that power, which by a single nod might have ordered my head to take leave of my shoulders, even before I could make an objection.

The whole procession having cleared the city gates, I lingered behind to smoke with the guards who are there stationed; and at that time the women of one of the viziers, who were permitted to accompany him to camp, passing by, brought Zeenab once again to my recollection. I sighed profoundly, when I reflected on the probable miserable fate which awaited her. She had been sent (so I heard from Nûr Jehan the day before our departure) to a small summer-house belonging to the Shah, situated at the foot of the high mountains which surround Tehran, where, with many other of the bazigers, she was to receive her education of dancing, music, and tumbling. The Shah had ordered that she was to be mistress of these accomplishments previously to his return in the autumn; when she should be honoured by the permission of exhibiting before him. As I rode away I could not help turning my head towards the spot where she was now confined, and which I could just discern a speck at the foot of the mountain. Perhaps at any other time I should have left every duty to endeavour to obtain a glimpse of her; but I was called up to head the procession again, and to be in readiness at Sulimanieh when the king should alight from his horse.

The day's march, and the attendance at my post, being at an end, I proceeded to the quarters of the chief executioner, where I found a small tent prepared for me and five other nasakchis, who were destined to be my companions for the remainder of the journey. I had already made their acquaintance in the city; but now we were brought into closer contact, for our tent was not more than six ghez¹ long and four broad, and we were thus thrown almost one upon the other. I, as the junior, fared of course the worst; but I determined

¹ A *ghez* is not quite a yard.

to put the best face possible upon any present inconveniences, anticipating many future advantages, which a certain confidence in my own pretty self whispered to me I should not fail to secure.

In addition to the chief executioner's naib, there was also a sub-lieutenant, who must have a place in my narrative, because, in fact, it was through him that I ultimately became noticed by the higher powers. His name was Shîr Ali, in rank a Reg, and a Shirazi by birth. Although natives of the two rival cities of Persia, yet without any particular previous cause, and by a combination of those nothings which give rise to most friendships, we became inseparable companions. He had given me a piece of water-melon one hot day when I was thirsty; I had lighted his pipe for him on another occasion; he had bled me with his penknife when I had overloaded my stomach with too much rice; and I had cured his horse of the colic by administering an injection of tobacco-water: in short, one thing led on to another, until a very close intimacy was established between us. He was three years older than I, tall, handsome, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, with the prettiest oval beard possible, just long enough to fringe round his chin, and with two large curls, twisting beautifully behind his ear, like a vine curling over the garden wall.

He had been long enough in the service to acquire all the tricks of his profession; for when we came to converse upon the subject, it was surprising what a vast field for the exercise of genius he threw open to my view.

He said, 'Do not suppose that the salary which the Shah gives his servants is a matter of much consideration with them: no, the value of their places depends upon the range of extortion which circumstances may afford, and upon their ingenuity in taking advantage of it. As, for instance, take our chief: his salary is 1000 tomauns per annum, which may or may not be regularly paid; that signifies little to him. He spends at least five or six times that sum; and how is he to get it, if it flows not from the contributions of those who

come under his cognisance? A khan has incurred the Shah's displeasure; he is to be beaten and fined: the chief executioner beats and mulets him in the inverse proportion of the present which the sufferer makes him. A rebel's eyes are to be put out; it depends upon what he receives, whether the punishment is done rudely with a dagger, or neatly with a penknife. He is sent on an expedition at the head of an army; wherever he goes presents are sent him from the towns and villages on his road to induce him not to quarter his troops upon them; and he uses his discretion, according to the value of what he receives, in choosing his halting stations. Most of those in high offices, even the viziers, make him annual gifts, in case the day of the Shah's displeasure should come, and then they would hope to be dealt with gently by him. In short, wherever a stick is to be brandished, wherever punishment is to be inflicted, there the chief executioner levies his dues; and they descend in a gradual measure from him to the lowest of his officers. Before I was a naib, and when I was called upon to lay the bastinado on some wretched culprit, many is the time that my compassion has been moved by a direct appeal to my purse; and then, instead of beating the sufferer's feet, I struck the felek upon which they rested. It was but last year that the principal secretary of state incurred the wrath of the Shah. He was ordered to receive the bastinado, and, by way of distinction, a small carpet was spread for him to lie upon: I and another were the operators, whilst two more held the felek. When we were taking the shawl and cap from his head, his girdle and outer coat (which became our lawful perquisites), he whispered to us, low enough not to be heard by the Shah (for this was all done in his presence), "By the mothers that bore you, do not beat me much! I'll give you each ten tomauns if you will not strike me." His heels were tripped up, his feet placed in the noose, whilst his back reposed on the carpet; and then we set to work. For our own sakes, we were obliged to start fair, and we laid on until he roared sufficiently; and then, having ably made him increase his offer until he had bid

up to any price we wished, we gradually ceased beating his feet, and only broke our sticks over the felek. Much ingenuity was displayed on both sides, in order that the Shah might not discover that there was any understanding between us. His bidding was interwoven with his groans, something after this manner;—" *Ahi amān! amān!* For pity's sake, by the soul of the Prophet! twelve tomauns.— By the love of your fathers and mothers! fifteen tomauns. By the king's beard! twenty tomauns.—By all the Imāms! by all the prophets! thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, hundred, thousand,—anything you want." When it was over, we soon found that his generosity had diminished quite as rapidly as it had before increased, and we were satisfied to receive what he first offered to us, which he was obliged to give, fearing if a similar misfortune again overtook him, we should then show him no mercy.'

Shīr Ali, holding this sort of language, gave me such an insight into the advantages of my situation, that I could dream of nothing but bastinadoing, and getting money. I went about all day flourishing a stick over my head, practising upon any object that had the least resemblance to human feet, and to such perfection did I bring my hand, that I verily believe I could have hit each toe separately, had I been so ordered. The first impulse of my nature was not cruelty, that I knew: I was neither fierce nor brave, that I also knew: I therefore marvelled greatly how of a sudden I had become such an unsainted lion.¹ The fact is, the example of others always had the strongest influence over my mind and actions; and I now lived in such an atmosphere of violence and cruelty, I heard of nothing but of slitting noses, cutting off ears, putting out eyes, blowing up in mortars, chopping men in two, and baking them in ovens, that, in truth, I am persuaded, with a proper example before me, I could almost have impaled my own father.

¹ *Shīr bi pīr*—a lion without a saint is a favourite Persian epithet when applied to a desperado, a fellow without compassion.

CHAPTER XXXIV

EMPLOYED IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY, HAJJÍ BABA GIVES A SPECIMEN OF PERSIAN DESPOTISM

THE Shah moved slowly towards Sultanieh, and at length, after fourteen days' march, when a fortunate hour had been selected for his arrival, he took possession of the summer palace, which has of late days been erected there for his residence. Situated on a hill, not far from the remains of the ancient city, it commands a view of the whole plain, which now, to an immense extent, was covered with the white tents of the camp. It was a magnificent sight, and I felt all the importance of the nasakchi rising in my breast, as I contrasted my present situation with my wretched and forlorn condition when an inmate in the tents of the Turcomans. 'In short, I am somebody now,' said I to myself: 'formerly I was one of the beaten, now I am one of the beaters. I should just do for an example of the active and passive participle, with which my old master, the mollah at Ispahan, used to puzzle me, when endeavouring to instil a little Arabic into my mind. Please Heaven that my good dispositions towards my fellow-creatures may soon have an opportunity of being displayed.'

Scarcely had I made these reflections, when Shír Ali came up to me, and said, 'Our fortune has taken a flight upwards: you are to accompany me, and *Inshallah!* please Allah! we shall make clean work of it. You must know, that the provisions for the king's camp are supplied, in great measure, by the surrounding villages. It seems that the village of Kadi Sawar, situated between this and Hamadan, has not sent its quota, upon a pretext that one of the princes, with his suite, not long ago, on a hunting excursion, had there settled himself

for several days, and eaten the inhabitants out of house and home. I am ordered to proceed thither, to investigate the business, and to conduct the *ked khoda* (the head man), with the elders of the village, before our chief. Since you are my friend, I have received permission to take you with me, although the other *nasakchis* complain that they have lost their turn. You must be ready to join me after the evening prayer, for I intend to be there to-morrow morning.'

I was overjoyed to find myself so soon brought into action; and, although I did not know precisely the plan of operations which Shîr Ali would adopt, yet I had wit enough to perceive that a great field was open to the ingenuity of fellows like us, who are always guided by the state of the weather.¹ 'Our star will be an evil one, indeed,' said I, 'if that destructive prince has left us nothing to glean. Some poet once said "no melon is so bad but hath its rind, and although a tyrant may pluck out a beard by the roots, yet still the chin is left upon which it grew."' With these thoughts in my head I went to my horse, which, with the other *nasakchi's* horses, was picketed near our tents, and prepared him for the journey. Casting off his head and heel ropes, I could not help comparing him to myself.—'Now,' said I, 'beast! you are free to kick and plunge, and do what mischief you can'; and so, thought I, is the Persian when absolved from the fear of his master.

Shîr Ali and I quitted the camp at sunset, accompanied by a lad, seated on the top of a loaded mule, that carried our beds; and the coverings, ropes, etc., for our horses. Since I had become a soldier, I also had attached the title of Beg to my name: and, to add to my importance in this expedition, I borrowed a silver chain for my horse's head, and a handsome silver-mounted pistol for my girdle, from one of my comrades, and promised to bring him a *soghât*, or present, in case the harvest proved abundant.

We travelled all night, and, having slept for two hours at a village on the road, reached Kadj Sawar just as the women

¹ The expression is '*hawâ been*,' which answers to our 'time-servers,' but which literally signifies what has been given in the text.

were driving the cattle from their stables, and the men smoking their water-pipes, previously to going to their work in the field. As soon as we were perceived making for the village, it was evident that a great stir was produced. The women ceased from their cries, and hid their faces, and the men arose from their seats. I wish my reader could have seen the air and countenance which Shîr Ali Beg put on as we approached. He swelled himself out at least into the size of the chief executioner himself, and with a tone of authority, which sufficiently indicated who and what he was, inquired for the chief of the village. A plain man with a grey beard, humble mien, and still humbler clothing, stepped forward, and said, 'Peace be with you, Aga! I am he; I am your servant. May your footsteps be fortunate, and your shadow never be less!' And then saying '*Bismillah!*' in the name of God! we were helped off our horses with all due respect. One held the horse's head, another the stirrup, whilst a third put his hand under the arm-pit, and thus we alighted, giving ourselves as much weight as we could, and making up our backs like men of consequence. A small carpet was spread at the door of the ked khoda's house, to which we had been conducted, followed by almost all the male population of the village, and there we seated ourselves until a room within was prepared. The ked khoda himself pulled off our boots, and otherwise performed all the acts of politeness and attention which are shown to guests on their arrival. Shîr Ali having received this with the dignity of one who thought it his due, and having let off several long whiffs from his pipe, said, with great emphasis, to our host, 'You, that are the ked khoda of Kadj Sawar, know, that I am come on the part of Shah,—on the part of the Shah, again I say,—that I am come to know why this village has not sent its quota of provisions for the use of the royal camp at Sultanieh, according to the order issued in the firman two months ago, signified to you by the governor of Hamadan?—Give me an answer, and make your face white if you can.'

The ked khoda answered, 'Yes, by my eyes! what I have said before I will say now. All these men present (pointing to

his fellow-villagers) know it to be the truth; and if I lie, may I become stone-blind! *Arz mi karamam*, I beg leave to state, O Nasakchi! that you, by the blessing of God, you, in fine, are a man,—you are a wise, a clever, and a sharp-sighted man,—you are also a Mussulman, and you fear God. I shall not say more than the truth, nor less; I shall explain what has happened, and then leave you to decide.'

'Well, well, say on,' said Shfr Ali; 'I am the king's servant: whatever the Shah will decide, that you must look to.'

'You are the master,' replied the ked khoda; 'but pray give ear to my tale. About three months ago, when the wheat was about a ghez high, and lambs were bleating all over the country, a servant belonging to the Prince Kharab Cûli Mirza announced to us, that his master would take up his quarters in the village the next day, in order to hunt in the surrounding country, which abounds in antelopes, wild asses, partridges, bustards, and game of all descriptions. He ordered the best houses to be in readiness for him and his suite, turned out their inhabitants, and made demands for provisions of all sorts. As soon as this intelligence was known, alarm was spread throughout the village, and seeing that nothing was to be done with the Prince's servant, either by bribe or persuasion, to evade the disaster, we determined to abandon our houses and take to the mountains until the evil day had gone by. Had you seen the state of these poor peasants, when forced to abandon everything they had in their world, your heart would have turned upside down, and your liver would have become water.'

'What do you mean?' exclaimed Shfr Ali; 'the Shah's villages are left desolate, and I am to pity the fugitives? No, they would have all been put to death had the Shah known it.'

'For pity's sake,' continued the old villager, 'hear the end of my story, and allow yourself to be softened. We loaded our cattle at nightfall with everything we could carry away, and took to the mountains, where we settled in a dell, close to a stream of running water. There only remained behind three sick old women and the village cats.'

‘Do you hear that, Hajji?’ said my companion, addressing himself to me: ‘they carried away everything valuable, and left the bare walls, and their old women to the prince. Well,’ said he to the ked khoda, ‘proceed.’

‘We sent spies from time to time,’ continued the old man, ‘to bring intelligence of what was doing, and took up our abode among the rocks and cliffs of the mountains. About noon the next day the party appeared, and when they discovered that we had fled, their rage and disappointment were great.’

‘The servants of the Prince went from house to house, and drove in the doors with violence. The only object which at all restrained them was one of the old women, who, having acquired sufficient strength to rise from her bed, attacked them with such reproaches, that none was bold enough to face her. The Prince sent for provisions from a neighbouring town, and took up his abode in my house. Wherever they found corn, they seized upon it; they burnt our implements of husbandry for firewood, and when they were expended had recourse to doors and windows, and even to the beams and rafters of our houses. Their horses were picketed in the new wheat, and they even cut down a great extent of it to carry away. In short, we are entirely ruined; we have neither money, clothes, cattle, houses, nor provisions; and, except in God and you,’ addressing himself to Shîr Ali and me, ‘we have no other refuge.’

Upon this Shîr Ali Beg jumped up from his seat, took the old man vigorously by the beard, and said, ‘Are you not ashamed, old man, with these grey hairs, to utter such lies? But a moment ago you told us that you had carried into the mountains all that was most valuable, and now pretend that you are ruined. This can never be! We have not travelled all this way to eat your dirt. If you think that we have brought our beards to market to be laughed at, you are mistaken. You don’t yet know Shîr Ali: we are men who sleep with one eye open and the other shut; no fox steals from its hole without our knowledge: if you think yourself a cat, we are the fathers of cats. Your beard must be a great deal longer, you

must have seen much more country, before you can expect to take us in.'

'No, God forgive me!' said the ked khoda, 'if I have thought to deceive you. Who am I, that should dare to think so? We are the Shah's *rayals*, peasantry; whatever we have is his; but we have been stripped, we have been skinned; go, see with your own eyes—look at our fields—look into our store-rooms—we have neither corn abroad nor corn at home.'

'Well,' said Shtr Ali, 'skinned or unskinned, with corn or without it, we have only one course to pursue, and one word to say,—the Shah's orders must be executed. Either you deliver in kind or in money, your prescribed quota of provisions, or you and your elders must proceed with us to Sultanieh, where you will be consigned over to the proper authorities.'

After these words, much whispering and consultation took place between the ked khoda and the village elders, who, having huddled themselves into a corner, left us wrapt up in our own dignity, smoking our pipes, with apparently the greatest indifference.

At length the result of their conference was made known, and they changed their order of attack; for the chief of the village now undertook to soften me, and another old man Shtr Ali Beg. The former approached me with every manifestation of great friendship, and began, as usual, by flattery. According to him, I was the most perfect of God's creatures. He then swore that I had excited feelings of love both in his breast, and in that of all the villagers, and that I alone was the person to extricate them from their difficulties. As long as this lasted, I merely kept a steady countenance, and made play with my pipe; but when he had a little more entered into particulars, and talked of what we were likely to get, I must own that I became considerably more interested. He said that they had consulted upon what was to be done; and were unanimous, that to send what they had not was impossible, and therefore out of the question; but perhaps if something could be offered to us to protect their interests, they were ready to satisfy us on that head.

'All this is very well,' said I, 'but I am not the only person to be considered. We here are only two, but recollect that our chief must be also satisfied, and if you do not begin by him, your labour and expense will be in vain: and I can tell you, if you grease his palm, you must measure your roghun (grease) by the maun,¹ and not by the miscal.'

'Whatever we possess,' said the ked khoda, 'we will give; but of late taxation has been so heavy, that, excepting our wives and children, we have in fact nothing to offer.'

'I tell you what, friend,' said I, 'unless you have money, ready downright cash, to give, any other offer is useless: with money in your hand, you may buy the Shah's crown from his head; but without it, I can only promise you a harvest of bastinadoes.'

'Ah!' said the ked khoda, 'money, money! where are we to procure money? Our women, when they get a piece, bore a hole through it, and hang it about their necks by way of ornament; and if we, after a life of hard toil, can scrape up some fifty tomauns, we bury them in the earth, and they give us more anxiety than if we possessed the mountain² of light.' Then approaching to put his mouth to my ear, he whispered with great earnestness, 'You are a Mussulman, in fine, and no ass. You do not conceive that we will go into the lion's mouth if it can be avoided; tell me (pointing to my companions) how much will he be contented with?—can I offer him five tomauns, and a pair of crimson *shalwars* (trousers)?'

'What do I know,' said I, 'what will satisfy him? All I can say is, that he possesses not a grain of commiseration: make the tomauns ten, and the trousers a coat, and I will endeavour to make him accept them.'

'Oh, that is too much,' said the old man; 'our whole village is not worth that sum. Satisfy him with the five and the trousers, and our gratitude will be shown by a present for yourself that will astonish you.'

¹ A maun is seven pounds and a half; a miscal, twenty-four grains.

² The Shah's great diamond, which he wears in one of his armlets, is called the *koh nûr*, or the mountain of light.

Upon this our conference broke off, and I was as anxious to hear what had taken up my companion, as he was impatient to learn the result of my whisperings with the ked khoda. Comparing notes, we found that both the old villagers had been endeavouring to ascertain what might be our respective prices. I assured Shîr Ali, that I had given him out for the veriest crucible in Persia, saying that he could digest more gold than an ostrich could iron, and was withal so proud, that he rejected units as totally unworthy of notice, and never took less than tens.

‘Well said,’ answered Shîr Ali; ‘and I told my old negotiator, that unless you were handsomely paid, you were equal to any violence, notwithstanding your silence and quiet looks.’

At length, after some delay, the whole party came forward again, headed by the ked khoda, who, bringing an ostensible present of apples, pears, a pot of honey, and some new cheese, begged my companion to accept it, in terms usually made on such occasions. When it had been spread before us, in an under-tone of voice the ked khoda made his offer of five tomauns and the trousers, and talked of his misery, and that of his village, in a manner which would have melted any breast but that of Shîr Ali.

We agreed at once to reject the present, and ordered it to be taken from before us. This produced considerable dismay among the poor people, and they walked off with their trays of fruit, etc., on their heads, with slow and sorrowful steps.

In about half-an-hour they appeared again, the ked khoda having previously ascertained that if he came with the ten tomauns and a coat, the present would be accepted. When we had eaten thereof, Shîr Ali Beg having pocketed his gold and secured his coat, I began to look for that something for myself which was to astonish me: nothing, however, was produced, notwithstanding certain significant winks and blinks with which the ked khoda ever and anon kept me in play.

‘Where is it?’ said I to him at last, quite out of patience. ‘What is it? how much?’

‘It is coming,’ said he; ‘have a little patience; it is not yet quite prepared.’

At length, after some waiting, with great parade, the pair of trousers, which had been rejected by Shīr Ali, were placed before me on a tray, and offered for my acceptance, accompanied by a profusion of fine words.

‘What news is this?’ exclaimed I: ‘do you know, ye men without shame!’ addressing myself to those who stood before me, ‘that I am an executioner,—one who can burn your fathers, and can give you more grief to devour than you have ever yet experienced? What mean ye by bringing me this pair of frowzy shalwars? That which has passed through many generations of your ignoble ancestors, do ye now pretend to put off upon me? Fools indeed you must be, to suppose that I will espouse your interests, and set forth your grievances, merely for the sake of this dirty rag! Away with it, or you will see what a nasakchi can do!’

Upon this, they were about complying with my orders, when Shīr Ali Beg stopped them, and said, ‘Let me look at the trousers. Ah,’ said he, holding them up at the same time between his eyes and the sun, and examining them with all the care of an old clothes’ broker, ‘they will do; they have no defect: be it so, they are my property, and many thanks for them. May your family prosper!’

Every one looked astonished; no one dared make an objection; and thus I, who had been anticipating such great advantages, lost even the miserable perquisite which I might have had, and only gained sufficient experience to know another time how to deal with my countrymen, and moreover, how to trust one who called himself my friend.

CHAPTER XXXV

FORTUNE, WHICH PRETENDED TO FROWN, IN FACT SMILES UPON HAJJÍ BABA, AND PROMOTES HIM TO BE SUB-LIEUTENANT TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIONER.

Two fat lambs, which were tied on our baggage mule, were the only present we brought with us for our chief. As soon as we reached the camp, we immediately presented ourselves to the naib, who forthwith carried us before the executioner, who was seated in his tent, in conversation with one or two of his friends.

‘Well,’ said he to Shír Ali, ‘what have you done? Have you brought the corn, or the ked khoda, which?’

‘I beg leave to state for your service,’ said Shír Ali, ‘neither. The ked khoda and the elders of Kadj Sawar have sent two lambs to be laid at your feet; and they have convinced us with our own eyes, that excepting them, not a thing have they left, not even their own souls, so entirely and completely have they been pillaged; on the contrary, if food be not sent to them, they will eat up one another.’

‘Do you say so, indeed!’ exclaimed the khan: ‘if they have lambs, they must also have sheep. By what account do you reckon?’

‘That’s true,’ said Shír Ali, ‘and everything that you say is equally so; but we were talking of corn, and not of sheep.’

‘But why did not you follow your orders, and bring the ked khoda and the elders?’ said our chief. ‘If I had been there, the rogues, I would have roasted them alive. I would have tied them with the camel tie, until they confessed that they had something. Tell me, why did you not bring them?’

‘We wished much to bring them,’ said Shír Ali, looking at

me to help him out. 'Yes, we had bound them all together, and we wanted very much to bring them: we also beat and abused them. Hajji Baba knows it all; for Hajji Baba told them if they had not money to give, they would certainly meet with no mercy. Mercy was a thing totally out of our way; for if they knew anything, they must be aware that our khan, our lord and master, the Nasakchi Bashi, was a man of such invincible courage, of a resolution so great, and of bowels so immovable, that if once they got within his grasp, it was all over with them. Yes, we told them all that, and they almost sunk into the earth.'

'What does he say, Hajji Baba?' said the khan, turning round to me: 'I have not quite understood why these men were not brought to me?'

I answered in great humility, 'Indeed, O khan, I also do not understand. Shîr Ali Beg, who is your deputy-lieutenant, had the whole business in his hands. I went in his service; I am nobody.'

Upon this the khan got into a violent rage, and branded us by every odious name of contempt and reproach that he could think of. 'It is plain,' said he to his friends, 'that these villains have been playing tricks. Tell me,' said he to Shîr Ali, 'by my soul, by the king's salt, tell me, how much have you got for yourself? and you, Aga Hajji,' addressing himself to me, 'you, who have scarcely been a month in service, how much have you secured?'

In vain we both protested our innocence; in vain we swore that there was nothing to gain; nobody would believe us; and the scene ended by our being driven out of the tent in custody of the naib, who was ordered to confine us until the chiefs of the village should have been actually brought to the camp, and confronted with us.

When Shîr Ali and I were left to ourselves, he immediately endeavoured to make me a partaker of the spoil, and offered to give me up half of it.

'Not so, my friend,' said I; 'it is now too late. If you have drunk and enjoyed the forbidden wine, and have got a head-

ache by it, it is no reason that you should endeavour to make me sick too. I have had a lesson, in which you have acted as master, which will satisfy me for this time.'

He then endeavoured to make me promise to stand by him, when we should be confronted with the ked khoda, and to swear through thick and thin to everything that he intended to advance; but I was too much alive to the consequences to make any such promise. He said that if once he were brought to the felek to receive the bastinado, he knew that he could not survive it; for so universal a terrorist had he been when operating upon the feet of others, that now he felt he should be treated without the least mercy; and he therefore swore upon the Koran, that he would undergo every misery rather than be tied to the stake.

When the time came for being called up again before our chief, Shír Ali was nowhere to be found. He had absconded, and when I was interrogated, all that I could say amounted to this,—that I knew he dreaded the idea of being bastinadoed, and that I supposed he had made off to escape it.

As soon as I appeared before my judge, the men of Kadj Sawar, who were already standing before him, declared one and all, that I had neither exacted nor received anything from them; but, on the contrary, that I had urged them to make a considerable present to the khan. They poured out the whole of their complaints against Shír Ali, who they declared had put the finishing stroke to their misery, and had even torn off the new skin that had begun to cover their old wounds.

All this was slowly working for my advantage, and paving the road to my promotion. The story had got abroad, and was in every one's mouth. I was looked upon as a paragon of moderation.

'This comes from having been a doctor,' says one; 'wisdom is better than riches.' 'He knows the doctrine of consequences,' says another; 'his feet will never be where his head should be.' In short, I had acquired the reputation of being a clever and a cautious fellow, merely owing to events playing fortunately into my hands; and I lost nothing from being looked upon as a man

whose taleh (luck) was good, and one whose star was fortunate.

The result of this part of my history was, that I was installed in the situation of the fugitive, and became the sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner of Persia—a character, whatever my readers may think of it, of no small consequence, as they will hereafter discover.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ALTHOUGH BY TRADE AN EXECUTIONER, HE SHOWS A FEELING HEART.
HE MEETS WITH A YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN IN DISTRESS.

THE Shah was at this time engaged in a war with the Muscovites, who had established themselves in Georgia, and were threatening the frontier provinces of Persia situated between the rivers Kûr and Arras. The governor of Erivan, known by the title of Serdar or general, and one of the Shah's most favourite officers, had long ago opened the campaign by desultory attacks upon the advanced posts of the enemy, and by laying waste the villages and country in the track they were likely to keep in advancing towards Persia. An army, under the command of the heir apparent and governor of the great province of Aderbijân, had also been collected near Tabriz; and it was intended that he should immediately proceed to the seat of war, in order, if possible, to drive the enemy back to Teflis, and, according to the language of the court, carry its arms even to the walls of Moscow.

Intelligence was daily expected at the royal camp of Sultanieh, from the Serdar, concerning an attack which he had announced it his intention to make upon the Russian post of Gavmishlû; and orders were issued for giving a suitable reception to the heads of the enemy, which it is always the etiquette to send upon announcing a victory, for such no doubt was expected to be the result of the attack. A chapper, or courier, was at length seen riding towards the camp in great haste. He was the conductor of five horse-loads of heads, 'tis true, and they were heaped up with great pomp and parade before the principal entrance of the royal tents; but it became evident that something had taken place which required a reinforcement; for on

the very next morning our chief, Namerd Khan, was appointed to the command of a body of ten thousand cavalry, which were ordered to march immediately to the banks of the Arras.

The Min Bashies, the heads of thousands; the Yûz Bashies, the heads of hundreds; the On Bashies, the heads of tens; and all the officers commanding the troops, were seen hurrying over the camp in various directions, attending upon their khans, and receiving their orders. The tent of Namerd Khan was filled with the chiefs of the expedition, to whom he distributed his directions, giving them the order of march, and allotting to each division its station in halting at the villages on the route. My duty was to precede the troops by a day, accompanied by a detachment of nasakchies, to make arrangements for billeting the men in the villages. This was a duty requiring activity and exertion; but at the same time accompanied by great advantages, which, had I chosen to avail myself of, might have increased the weight of my purse. However, the recent example of Shîr Ali Beg was too strong before my eyes not to repress any desire I might have of levying contributions, so I determined for the present to keep my hands pure, and to quench the flame of covetousness by the waters of prudence.

I set off with my detachment, and reached Erivan several days before the troops could arrive. We here found the Serdar, who, after his attack upon Gavmishlû, had retreated to await the reinforcement of the cavalry under our chief. The army under the prince-royal had proceeded to another part of the frontier, with the intention of attacking the fortress of Ganja, of which the enemy had recently acquired possession, and unable to spare any of his troops, the Serdar had solicited assistance from the Shah.

As soon as Namerd Khan and the Serdar had met and consulted, it was determined that spies should immediately be sent forwards in order to ascertain the position, and the movements of the Russians; and I was fixed upon to head a detachment of twenty men on the part of the chief executioner, whilst a

similar number was sent by the Serdar, who at the same time were to be our guides through such parts of the country as were unknown to me.

We assembled at the close of day, and began our march just as the muezzins called the evening prayer. Proceeding at once to the village of Ashtarek, we passed Etchmiazin, the seat of the Armenian patriarch, on our left. It was scarcely dawn of day when we reached the bridge of Ashtarek, still obscured by the deepest shade, owing to the very high and rocky banks of the river, forming, as it were, two abrupt walls on either side. The village itself, situated on the brink of these banks, was just sufficiently lighted up to be distinguished from the rocks among which it was built; whilst the ruins of a large structure, of heavy architecture, rose conspicuous on the darkest side, and gave a character of solemnity and grandeur to the whole scenery. This, my companions informed me, was the remains of one of the many Armenian churches so frequently seen in this part of Persia. The river dashed along through its dark bed, and we could perceive the foam of its waters as we began to cross the bridge. The rattle of our horses' hoofs over its pavement had alarmed the village dogs, whose bark we could just distinguish; the shrill crow of a cock was also heard, and most of our eyes were directed towards the houses, when one of our men, stopping his horse, exclaimed, 'Ya, Ali! (Oh, Ali!) What is that?' pointing with his hand to the church: do not you see, there, something white?'

'Yes, yes,' said another, 'I see it; it's a ghôl! without doubt it's a ghôl! This is the true hour; it is in search of a corpse. I daresay it is devouring one now.'

I also could see that something was there, but it was impossible to make it out.

We halted upon the bridge, looking up with all our eyes, every one being satisfied that it was a supernatural being. One called upon Ali, another upon Hossein, and a third invoked the Prophet and the twelve Imâms. None seemed inclined to approach it, but every one suggested some new mode of exorcism. 'Untie the string of your trousers,' said an old

Irâki, 'that's the way we treat our ghôls in the desert near Ispahan, and they depart instantly.'

'What good will that do?' answered a delikhan (a hare-brained youth); 'I'd rather keep the beast out than let it in.'

In short, what with joking, and what with serious talk, the morning broke sufficiently to convince us that the apparition must have been an illusion of our senses, for nothing now was to be seen. However, having passed the bridge, the said delikhan, shivering in his stirrups, and anxious to gallop his horse, exclaimed, 'I'll go and find the ghôl,' drove his horse up a steep bank, and made towards the ruined church. We saw him return very speedily, with intelligence, that what we had taken for a ghôl was a woman, whose white veil had attracted our notice, and that she with a man, were apparently hiding themselves among the deep shades of the broken walls.

Full of anxiety for whatever might throw a light upon the object of my duty, I lost no time in proceeding to the ruin, in order to ascertain why these people hid themselves so mysteriously, and ordering five men to follow me, I made the rest halt near the bridge.

We saw no one until turning the sharp angle of a wall we found, seated under an arch, the objects of our search. A woman, apparently sick, was extended on the ground, whilst a man leaning over, supported her head, in an attitude of the greatest solicitude. Enough of daylight now shone upon them, to discover that they were both young. The woman's face, partially hid by her veil, notwithstanding its deadly paleness, was surprisingly beautiful; and the youth was the finest specimen of strength, activity, and manliness that I had ever seen. He was dressed in the costume of Georgia, a long knife hung over his thigh, and a gun rested against the wall. Her veil, which was of the purest white, was here and there stained with blood, and torn in several places. Although I had been living amongst men inured to scenes of misery, utter strangers to feelings of pity or commiseration, yet in this instance I and

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my companions could not fail being much interested at what we saw, and paused with a sort of respect for the grief of these apparently unfriended strangers, before we ventured to break the silence of our meeting.

‘What are you doing here?’ said I: ‘If you are strangers, and travellers, why do you not go into the village?’

‘If you have the feelings of a man,’ said the youth, ‘give me help for the love of God! Should you be sent to seize us by the Serdar, still help me to save this poor creature who is dying. I have no resistance to offer; but pray save her.’

‘Who are you?’ said I. ‘The Serdar has given us no orders concerning you. Where do you come from? Whither going?’

‘Our story is long and melancholy,’ said the young man: ‘if you will help me to convey this poor suffering girl where she may be taken care of, I will relate everything that has happened to us. She may recover with good and kind usage: she is wounded, but I trust not mortally, and with quiet may recover. Thanks to Heaven, you are not one of the Serdar’s officers! Perhaps you may befriend me, and my lamentable tale may perhaps induce you to take us under your protection.’

This appeal to my feelings was unnecessary: the countenance and appearance of the youth had excited great interest in my breast, and I immediately lent myself to his wishes, telling him that we would, without delay, convey his sick friend to the village, and then, having heard his story, settle what to do for him.

She had to this moment said nothing, but gathered her veil round her with great precaution, now and then uttering low groans, which indicated pain, and venting the apparent misery of her mind by suppressed sighs. I ordered one of my followers to dismount from his horse; we placed her upon it, and immediately proceeded to the village, where, having inspected the interior of several houses, I pitched upon that which afforded the best accommodation, and whose owner appeared obliging and humane; there we deposited her, giving directions that she should be nursed with the greatest care. An old woman of the village, who had the reputation of skill in curing

wounds and bruises, was sent for, and she undertook her cure. I learnt from the youth that he and his companion were Armenians; and as the inhabitants of Ashtarek were of the same persuasion, they very soon understood each other, and the poor sufferer felt that she could not have fallen into better hands.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE HISTORY OF YÛSÛF THE ARMENIAN, AND HIS WIFE MARIAM

It was my intention to have proceeded to the heights of Aberan, where we should have found a cool region and good pasturage for our horses, before halting for the day; but hearing that the wandering tribes, whom we had expected to find encamped in a certain spot, and upon whose tents and provisions I had reckoned, were removed far into the mountains, fearful of the war which had just broken out, I determined to halt at Ashtarek until the heat of the day should have subsided. Accordingly, my men were quartered in different parts of the village: some settled themselves under the arches of the bridge, picketing their horses among the long grass; one or two took possession of a mill, situated in the bed of the river, whose wheel was turned by water, made to flow in an elevated channel for the purpose; and I spread my carpet in an open room, built upon a shelf on the highest part of the rocky bank, from whence I had a view of the whole scene, and also could discern any object that might be coming towards us from the Russian frontier.

Feeling refreshed by two hours' sound sleep, upon awaking I sent for the Armenian youth; and whilst the good people of the village served us a light breakfast, of which we were both much in need, I requested him to relate his adventures, and particularly what had brought him into the situation in which he had been discovered. Refreshed with rest and food, the morning sun enlightening the spot we occupied, the manly features of the youth exhibited all their beauty; and, as he spoke, their animation and earnestness helped wonderfully to

convince me that all he said was the truth. He spoke as follows:—

‘I am an Armenian by birth, and a Christian; my name is Yúsúf. My father is chief of the village of Gavmishlú inhabited entirely by Armenians, situated not far from the beautiful river of Pembaki, and about six agatch from this place. In the middle of a verdant country, full of the richest pasturage, and enjoying a climate celebrated for coolness and serenity, we are a healthy and a hardy race; and, notwithstanding the numerous exactions of our governors, we were happy in our poverty. We live so far within the mountains, that we are more distant from the tyranny usually exercised upon those who abide nearer great towns, the residences of governors; and, secluded from the world, our habits are simple, and our modes of life patriarchal. I had an uncle, my father’s brother, a deacon and an attendant upon the head of our church, the patriarch at Etchmiazin; and another uncle, by my mother’s side, was the priest of our village: therefore my family being well in the church, determined that I should follow the sacred profession. My father himself, who subsisted by tilling the ground, and by his own labour had cleared away a considerable tract near the village, having two sons besides me, expected to receive sufficient help from them in the field, and therefore agreed to spare me for the church. Accordingly, when about ten years old, I went to Etchmiazin to be educated, where I learned to read, write, and perform the church service. I derived great pleasure from instruction, and read every book that came in my way. A very extensive library of Armenian books exists at the convent, of which I managed now and then to get a few; and although mostly on religious subjects, yet it happened that I once got a history of Armenia, which riveted all my attention; for I learnt by it that we once were a nation, having kings, who made themselves respected in the world. Reflecting upon our degraded state at the present day, and considering who were our governors, I became full of energy to shake off the yoke, and these feelings turned my thoughts from the sacred profession to which I was destined. About

this time war broke out between Persia and Russia, and our village lying in the track of the armies marching to the frontiers, I felt that my family would require every protection possible, and that I should be more usefully employed with them than in a cloister. Accordingly, but a short time before taking priest's orders, I left my friends at Etchmiazin, and returned to my father's house. I was welcomed by every one. Already had they felt the horrors of war; for marauding parties of both Persians and Russians (both equally to be feared) had made their appearance, and molested the peaceable and inoffensive inhabitants of ours and the neighbouring villages. This frontier warfare, in its general results, was of no great utility to either of the powers at war, yet to those who inhabited the seat of it, its consequences were dreadful. We were continually harassed either by the fears of the invading enemy, or by the exactions and molestations of the troops of our own government. Our harvests were destroyed, our cattle dispersed, and ourselves in constant danger of being carried away prisoners. Anxious to preserve our property, and our only resource to keep us from starvation, we continued to till our fields, but went to work with swords by our sides, and guns ready loaded slung at our backs; and when a stranger appeared, whoever he might be, we immediately assembled and made a show of defence. By this means, for several years, we managed, with great difficulty and perseverance, to get in our harvest, and, by the blessing of Providence, had enough to subsist upon. But here I must begin some of those particulars which relate to my individual history.

' About two years ago, when securing our harvest, I had gone out long before the dawn to reap the corn of one of our most distant fields, armed and prepared as usual. I perceived a Persian horseman, bearing a female behind him, and making great speed through a glen that wound nearly at the foot of a more elevated spot, upon which I was standing. The female evidently had been placed there against her will, for as soon as she perceived me she uttered loud shrieks, and extended her arms. I immediately flew down the craggy side of the

mountain, and reached the lowermost part of the glen in time enough to intercept the horseman's road. I called out to him to stop, and seconded my words by drawing my sword, and putting myself in an attitude to seize his bridle as he passed. Embarrassed by the burthen behind him, he was unable either to use his sword or the gun slung at his back, so he excited his horse to an increased speed, hoping thus to ride over me; but I stood my ground, and as I made a cut with my sabre, the horse bounded from the road with so sudden a start, that the frightened woman lost her hold and fell off. The horseman, free of his incumbrance, would now have used his gun; but, seeing mine already aimed at him, he thought it most prudent to continue his road, and I saw nothing more of him.

'I ran to the assistance of the fallen woman, whom by her dress I discovered to be an Armenian. She was stunned and severely bruised: her outward veil had already disengaged itself, and in order to give her air I immediately pulled away the under veil which hides the lower part of the face (common to the Armenians), and, to my extreme surprise, beheld the most beautiful features that imagination can conceive. The lovely creature whom I supported in my arms was about fifteen years of age. Oh! I shall never forget the thrill of love, delight, and apprehension, which I felt at gazing upon her. I hung over her with all the intenseness of a first passion; a feeling arose in my heart which was new to me, and, forgetting everything but the object immediately before me, I verily believe that I should have been for ever riveted to that spot, had she not opened her eyes, and begun to show signs of life. The first words she spoke went to my very soul; but when she discovered where she was, and in the hands of an utter stranger, she began to cry and bewail herself in a manner that quite alarmed me. Little by little, however, she became more composed; and when she found that I was one of her own nation and religion, that I was, moreover, her deliverer, she began to look upon me with different feelings: my vanity made me hope that, perhaps, she was not displeased at the interest she had awakened in me. One thing, however, she did not cease to

deplora, and to upbraid me with.—I had withdrawn her veil;—there was no forgiveness for me—that indulgence which even a husband scarcely ever enjoys, that distinguishing emblem of chastity and honour, so sacred in the eyes of an Armenian woman,—every sense of decency had been disregarded by me, and I stood before her in the criminal character of one who had seen all her face. In vain I represented, that had I not relieved her mouth and nose from the pressure of the lower band, she must have suffocated; that her fall having deprived her of all sensation, had she not inhaled the fresh air, death would have been the consequence. Nothing would convince her that she was not a lost woman. However, the following argument had more effect upon her than any other; no one but myself was witness to her dishonour (if such she must call it); and I swore so fervently by the Holy Cross, and by St. Gregorio, that it should remain a profound secret in my heart as long as I had one to keep it in, that she permitted herself at length to be comforted. I then requested her to give me an account of her late adventure, and to tell me from whom it had been my good fortune to liberate her.

“As for the man,” said she, “all I know of him is, that he is a Persian. I never saw him before, and know of no object that he could have had in carrying me off, excepting to sell me for a slave. A few days ago a skirmish took place between a detachment of Persian cavalry and Georgians. The latter was driven back, and the Persians made some prisoners, whom they carried away in great triumph to Erivan. Our village had been occupied by the Persian troops some days before this affray, and I suppose then my ravisher laid his plan to carry me off, and make me pass for a Georgian prisoner. I had just got up in the morning, and had gone to the village-well with my pitcher to bring home water, when he darted from behind a broken wall, showed his knife, threatening to kill me if I did not follow him without noise, and made me mount behind him on his horse. We galloped away just as some other of the village maidens were proceeding to the well, and my only hope of being saved was from the alarm which I knew they would

instantly spread. We were out of sight in a few minutes, for we rode furiously over hill and dale, and cut across parts of the country unfrequented by travellers. At length, seeing you on the brow of the hill, I took courage, and gave vent to my cries, notwithstanding the threats of the Persian. You know the rest."

'She had scarcely finished speaking when we discovered several persons, one on horseback, the rest on foot, making towards us in great haste, and as they approached and were recognised by my fair one, it was delightful to watch her emotions.

"Oh! there is my father," exclaimed she, "and my brothers! there is Ovanes, and Agoop, and Aratoon! and my uncle too!"

'As they came up, she embraced them all with transports of delight. I was in agonies of apprehension lest some youth should appear, who might have excited other feelings in her heart; but no, none but relations were there. They explained to her that the alarm of her seizure had been spread throughout the village by her young friends; that luckily they had not yet gone to the fields, and the family horse was at home, upon which her father was instantly mounted. They had traced the fresh footsteps of her ravisher's horse as long as he kept the road, had marked the place where he turned from it, had seen them again in several places, had tracked him through a corn-field that led up a steep slope, and at length, from a high summit, Ovanes had seen them descending a glen, which must have been very near the spot where they had now found her.

'She said all this was true, and again thanked God and St. Gregory for her escape; and, after some hesitation, in a most embarrassed manner, pointed me out as her deliverer. The attention of the whole party was then directed to me. "Whose son are you?" said the old man, her father.

"I am the son of Coja Petros," said I, "the chief of the village of Gavnishlû."

"Ah! he is my friend and neighbour," answered he; "but

I do not know you ; perhaps you are the son who was educating at the Three Churches for a priest, and who came to the help of your family ?”

‘ I answered in the affirmative, and then he said, “ You are welcome.—May your house prosper!—You have saved our daughter, and we owe you eternal gratitude. You must come with us and be our guest. If ever it were necessary to kill a lamb, to eat and be merry, it is now. We, and all our families, will carry you upon our heads ; we will kiss your feet, and smooth your brow, for having saved our Mariam, and preserved her from dragging out her existence the slave of the Mussulman.”

‘ I then received the congratulations and kind speeches of her brothers and uncle, who all invited me to their village in so pressing a manner, that, unable to resist, and propelled by my anxiety to see Mariam, I accepted their offer, and we forthwith proceeded in a body.

‘ As we were winding down the side of one of the mountains, Mariam’s village, for such I shall call it, was pointed out to me, situated among trees, snugly seated in a warm nook, protected from every wind but the east, which here coming from the Kulzum, or the Caspian sea, is delightfully cool and serene. Beyond was the Pembaki river, winding its way through a beautiful valley, diversified by rich vegetation ; and at a greater distance we could just discern the church of Kara Klisseh, or the Black Monastery, the first station of the Russians on this part of their frontier, and situated on a dark and precipitous rock, rising conspicuous among the verdure of the surrounding scenery.

‘ When near the village we discovered that all its inhabitants, particularly the women and children, had been watching our steps down the slope, anxious to know whether Mariam had been retaken ; and when they saw her safe, there was no end to their expressions of joy. The story of her flight and of her rescue was soon told, and carried from one mouth to another with such rapidity and with such additional circumstances, that at length it came out that she had been carried away by a

giant, who had an iron head, claws and feet of steel, and scales on his back, mounted upon a beast that tore up the ground at every bound, and made noises in its rapid course over the hills like the discharges of artillery. They added to this, that of a sudden an angel, in the shape of a ploughboy, descended from the top of a high mountain in a cloud, and as he wielded a sword of fire in his hand, it frightened the horse, threw Mariam to the ground, and reduced the giant and his steed to ashes: for when she recovered from her fright, they were no longer to be seen. I was pointed out as the illustrious ploughboy, and immediately the attention of the whole village was turned towards me; but, unfortunately, when about receiving nearly divine honours, a youth, whom I had frequently met tending cattle in the mountains, recognised me, and said, "He is no angel—he is Yûsûf, the son of Coja Petros, of Gavmishlû"; and thus I was reduced to my mortality once more. However, I was treated with the greatest distinction by everybody, and Mariam's relations could not sufficiently testify their gratitude for the service I had rendered. But, all this time, love was making deep inroads in my heart. I no longer saw Mariam unveiled, that happy moment of my life had gone by; but it had put the seal to my future fate. "No," said I to myself, "nothing shall separate me from that beautiful maid; our destinies forthwith are one; Heaven has miraculously brought us together, and nothing but the decrees of Providence shall disunite us, even though to gain her I should be obliged to adopt the violence of the Persian, and carry her away by force." We met now and then, Mariam and I; and although our words were few, yet our eyes said much, and I knew that my passion was returned. Oh, how I longed to have met and engaged another, ay, twenty more Persians to prove my love! but I recollected that I was nothing but a poor Armenian, belonging to a degraded and despised nation, and that the greatest feat which I could ever expect to perform would be to keep the wolf from my father's flocks, or to drive the marauder from our fields.

'I remained the whole of that eventful day at Geuklû (the

name of the village), where the promised lamb was killed, and a large caldron of rice boiled. I returned on the following day to my parents, who had been alarmed at my absence, and who listened to the history of my adventures with all the earnestness and interest that I could wish.

‘I was so entirely absorbed by my love, that I could think of nothing else; therefore I determined to inform them of the situation of my affections. “I am of an age now,” said I to them, “to think and act for myself. Thanks to God, and to you, I have strong arms, and can work for my bread; I wish to marry, and Providence has prepared the way for me.”

‘I then requested them forthwith to demand Mariam from her parents, in order that I might make her my wife; and finished by kissing my father’s hand, and embracing my mother.

‘They said in answer, “That marriage was a serious consideration in these difficult times, and that the family was now too poor to incur the expense of a wedding. It was necessary to buy clothes, a ring, candles, sweetmeats, a crimson veil, bed and bed-covering, to pay the singers and musicians, and to make a feast; and where was money to be found to meet all this?”

‘I said, “’Tis true that money is wanted, and that no marriage can take place without it, both for the honour of our family, and for the purpose of showing my love to my intended; but I can borrow; I have friends both at Erivan and at the Three Churches; and I think I could borrow enough from the one and the other to pay the expenses of my wedding; and as for repayment, I will work so laboriously, and live so frugally, that little by little I shall pay off my debt. Besides, I can become the servant of a merchant, who would give me a share in his adventures; and one journey to Constantinople or to Astrachan would yield me enough profit to repay every one with interest.”

‘In short, I said so much, that at length they were persuaded to make the necessary overtures to the parents of Mariam; and it was fixed, that in the course of a few days my father, my uncle the priest, and one of the elders of the village, should

proceed to Geuklû, and ask her in marriage for me. In the meanwhile, I myself had been there almost every day, upon one pretext or another, and I had had several opportunities of informing her of my intentions, in order that she and her family might not be taken unawares.

'My father and his colleagues were very well received by the parents of my intended. Having talked over the matter, and seizing this opportunity of drinking some more than usual glasses of arrack, they agreed that we should be united as soon as the marriage-articles should have been agreed upon, and the forms of the nâm zed (the ceremony of betrothing) should have been gone through.

'Three days after this, my mother, accompanied by two old women of our village, by my uncle the priest, and me, proceeded to Geuklû for the purposes of the nâm zed, and settling the terms of the marriage. They were received with more ceremony than my father and his colleagues had been, and the women of the other party having met ours, negotiations were opened.

'My mother offered, on my part, that I should give of clothes to my bride two full suits, consisting of two shifts, one of crimson silk, the other of blue cotton; two pair of trousers, one of silk, the other of striped cotton; two jubbehs, or robes, fitting tight to the body, of chintz; two veils, one of white cotton, the other of chequered blue; two pair of slippers, one of green shagreen skin and high heels, the other of brown leather, with flat bone heels and shod with iron: and I was also to add a printed muslin handkerchief, and a set of bandages and kerchiefs for the head. She moreover offered fifty piastres in silver coin for minor expenses; and a chain for the neck, from which there should be suspended one gold tomaun of Persia.

'After some little consultation among the friends of my wife, this was agreed upon; but one of the old women, who had been a servant in a Persian family, started a demand which gave rise to some discussion; it was, that I ought to give something for sheer baha, or milk money, as is the custom

throughout Persia. Our party said this was not usual among the Armenians; the adverse party contended it was; in short, words were running high, when I requested my mother not to make any difficulty, but to offer ten piastres more; which being agreed upon, the whole was amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties.

'This had taken place among the women alone. I was then called in, with my uncle, to go through the ceremony, and strict injunctions were made me not to laugh, nor even to smile, while it lasted; for ill luck would attend the marriage if anything so indecorous took place at the first interview.

'I found my mother seated on the ground, flanked by her two old women, opposite to my bride's mother, supported by hers. Mariam entered at the same moment, and my mother then presented her with a ring (a brass one, alas!) from me, which she put on her finger, and then wine was administered to the priest; of which, when he had taken a copious draught, it was announced that we were betrothed man and wife, and we received the congratulations of all those around us. I was delighted, although prohibited from communicating with my intended; but went about kissing everybody, and so many benedictions were showered upon us, that perhaps no couple ever was so much blessed, by good wishes at least, as we were.

'My mother and her party having returned to our village, I proceeded to make the preparations for my wedding with a light heart, regardless of any event which might intervene to destroy it. When we came to discuss the money it was likely to cost, and the means of obtaining it, I was agreeably surprised to see my father walk into the room where the family was assembled with a bag in his hand. "Here," said he, "here is money. After all, the ked khoda of Gavmishlú can provide for his son as well as the best in the country. Here, Yúsúf," said he to me, "take these ten tomauns, my son, and lay them out in the purchase of your wife's clothes."

'Upon which I knelt down, kissed his hand, and craved his blessing.

‘My uncle, the priest, warmed by this generosity, said, “And here, nephew,—the church is poor indeed, and its ministers poorer,—but here—take these twenty silver abasis, and expend them in tapers for your wedding.” Others of those seated in the assembly also gave me something; by which means, without being reduced to the necessity of borrowing, I found my purse sufficiently well supplied to enable me to make my purchases at once. I expressed my thanks to my benefactors; and never before having had so much money in my possession, I scarcely knew what countenance to keep. However, my impatience knew no bounds; I was anxious to be already on my road to Erivan, where the clothes were to be bought; for there was no place nearer than that city in which a bazaar was to be found. But as I was ignorant of the arts of buying, and particularly ill-versed in women’s dresses, it was decided that my mother should accompany me mounted on our ass, whilst I followed on foot. She had an Armenian friend at Erivan, who would take us in for a night or two; and as for sleeping on the road, we could take up our abode in the tents of the wandering tribes, whose duties bind them to hospitality towards the stranger.

‘We departed, she on the ass, I with my sword by my side, and my gun on my shoulders; and followed by half the village, invoking good luck for us.

‘Having reached the heights of Aberan, we discovered an immense camp of white tents; one of which, belonging to the chief, was of a magnificent size. Horsemen whom we met informed us that the Serdar of Erivan was encamped there with a considerable body of cavalry; and it was supposed posted there to watch the motions of the Russians and Georgians, who, it was expected, were likely soon to move their forces forwards to the attack of Persia.

‘This intelligence gave us considerable alarm. My mother was for returning home, and for putting off the wedding. Too much in love to hearken to such a proposal, I urged her to travel more expeditiously, that we might be back the sooner. We proceeded so far on the first day, that I could see the

smoke of Erivan in the distance. We passed the night under a projecting rock, with the majestic mountain of Ararat in full view; and did not fail to cross ourselves when we first came in view of it, and of recommending ourselves to St. Gregorio, when we composed ourselves to sleep. The wandering tribes had gone too far out of our track for our purpose, therefore we did not think of seeking their protection; but, refreshed with our night's rest, we resumed our journey early in the morning, and reached Erivan in safety.

'My mother was received by her friend with kindness; and, the day after our arrival, they went to the bazaar to make purchases of the wedding-clothes, whilst I roamed about, gaping at everything, and listening to the speeches of those who were gathered together on the market-place. Various were the rumours concerning the operations of the Serdar against the enemy. It was evident that some movement was likely soon to take place, and an attack of an extraordinary nature to be made; for the people at the arsenal and powder-works had been more than usually employed in making ready certain instruments¹ of destruction, before unknown in Persia, and set on foot by Russian deserters themselves. I was so entirely taken up by my own affairs, and by the happiness in store for me, that this sort of intelligence passed by me totally unheeded. It just struck me, that we might endeavour to secure the protection of the Serdar, through our chief at the Three Churches, in case our village and its territory became the theatre of war; but when I reflected upon the length of time it would take to make such a deviation from our road, I abandoned the idea, and, in my impatience, trusted to my own sword and musket as sufficient protection against all invaders.

'My mother and I returned to our village by the same road we came, but not with quite so much speed; for the ass was laden with our purchases, and, in addition to my arms, I also carried a considerable share of the burthen. The Serdar's camp was still in the same place, and we passed on without hindrance

¹ It is supposed that the instruments here alluded to were hand-grenades.

or any occurrence worth relating, until we reached the high ground that overlooks Gavmishlú.

‘The sight of a tent first struck my mother, and she stopped.

“What is that, Yúsúf?” she cried out to me: “see, there is a tent.”

‘I, who had no thoughts in my head but those that concerned my wedding, answered, “Yes, I see; perhaps they are making preparations for an entertainment for us.”

“My husband’s beard with your entertainment!” exclaimed she; “what is become of your wits? Either Russians or Persians are there, as sure as I am a Christian; and in either case it is bad for us.”

‘We pushed on towards our dwelling with the greatest anxiety; and as we approached it, found that my mother had judged right. The village had been just occupied by a small detachment of Russian infantry, composed of fifty men, commanded by a Penjah Bashi, or a head of fifty, who, it seems, formed the advanced posts of an army quartered at a day’s distance from us. Every house in the village had been obliged to lodge a certain number of men, and ours, as the best, and belonging to the chief, was taken up by the captain.

‘You may conceive our consternation on finding this state of things; and, in particular, how wretched I was from the apprehension that my wedding must be put off to an indefinite time, when perhaps ruin would have overwhelmed us, and left us naked and destitute fugitives. Oh! the idea was too overwhelming, and I hastened to give vent to my feelings to my friends at Geuklú, who perhaps might afford me some consolation. Their village being considerably out of the track of the invaders, no troops had yet made their appearance amongst them; but when they heard what was passing on our side of the country, they immediately became partakers of all our fears. I saw Mariam, dear child of nature! The customs of our country did not permit us to converse openly; but love is fertile in expedients, and we managed to pour out eternal vows of constancy, and to swear upon the holy

cross of our faith, that, happen what might, we would ever be united.

‘These interviews happened frequently, and I became almost mad with rage and disappointment that we could not marry. It was evident some terrible catastrophe must take place soon,—the armies might meet from day to day, and then what would become of the rejoicings of our wedding-day! To undertake the performance of a ceremony of such importance, under these circumstances, would only be mocking Providence, and preparing for ourselves a futurity of misfortune. However, I was too much in love, and too impatient, not to have married under any circumstances, therefore I only endured what I could not well resist.

‘However, a fortnight had elapsed since our return, and nothing had happened. We were upon excellent terms with our guests the Russians, and as they were quiet and inoffensive, infinitely more so than Persians would have been under similar circumstances, we became very intimate. They were Christians as well as we; they made the sign of the cross; prayed at our church; ate pork and drank wine; all circumstances producing great sympathy of feeling, and strengthening the bonds of friendship between us. Their captain was a young man of great worth, and of such unassuming manners that he gave universal satisfaction. He kept the strictest discipline among his troops, and was himself the soberest of mankind. He was curious to instruct himself in our manners and customs, and encouraged us to converse with him upon everything that interested our family. This brought on a full exposition of our situation in regard to my wedding, to which he listened with a degree of interest so great, as to make him my friend for life.

‘He said, “But why should it not take place now? There is nothing to hinder it: we are here to protect you, and whatever we can give or lend, I promise that I will procure. The Persians do not show the least sign of moving, and our army must wait for reinforcements from Tefis before it can advance farther; therefore you will have all the necessary time

to perform your ceremonies in quiet and happiness, and perhaps with more splendour than if we had not been here."

'He, moreover, promised to make a present to the bride of some Georgian gold lace, and to lend me his horse, a fine Karadaghi, which I might mount on the occasion. He said so much, that he at length persuaded mine and my bride's relations not to defer the ceremony, and a day was fixed. Had any other man pressed the business so much, and appeared so personally interested in it, I should probably have been suspicious of the purity of his intentions, and certain feelings of jealousy might have arisen; but the captain was so ugly, so hideously ugly, so opposite to what passes for beauty amongst us, that I could have no fear concerning Mariam on his account; for if she could notice him, she could with the same facility become enamoured of an ape. His face was composed of a white leprous skin, with a head covered by hair, or rather quills, thrown about in a variety of stiff lines, of the colour of straw; his eyes were round holes scooped deep in their sockets, and situated behind small hillocks of cheek-bones; his nose was marked by a little bit of flesh, under which were pierced two holes as if with an awl, and his chin, as lucid as glass, did not show the smallest appearance of hair. A little down grew upon his upper lip, which for length and prominence quite outdid its fellow; and this indication of a man was as carefully kept greased and blacked as a pair of immense boots in which his legs were always cased.

"No," said I, to myself, "Mariam would sooner love her Persian giant than this creature; and when she comes to compare him to her intended (looking over myself at the same time with some complacency), I flatter myself that I may lay my jealous fears aside."

'And thus it was settled that I should wed. The evening before the wedding-day, the clothes and other articles, placed in trays borne on men's heads, and preceded by singers and musicians (of which some are to be found in every village), were sent to my bride. My band consisted of a man who played on the zourna, or hautbois, a performer on the tambourine, and

two who sang. As a mark of additional splendour, our Russian friends lent us a drum, the beating of which by one of our shepherd boys produced great effect all over the country. I followed my present a few hours after, for the purpose of receiving the one which my bride, according to custom, was to make me; consisting of a pair of brass-mounted pistols, made in the Caucasus, which had belonged to a great-uncle of hers, who had been a soldier in the troops of the Wali of Georgia, before the Russians had got possession of that country.

'On the following day, the day of my long expected happiness, I and all my family arose betimes in the morning. The weather was serene but sultry; there had been a tendency to storm for several days before, and heavy clouds stood in threatening attitudes with their white heads in the horizon. But nature was beautiful, and refreshed by a shower that had fallen in the night. My friend, the captain, lent me his horse, which I caparisoned and ornamented as well as I could on the occasion. I myself put on a new suit of clothes from head to foot, and with the addition of many silver-studded belts, cartouche-boxes, daggers, and other appendages fastened about me, and which had been lent me by a Georgian in the service of the Russians, I was told, and I believe it, that I made a very handsome appearance. Accompanied by my male relations, the Russian captain, and as many of his men as could be spared in order to create a crowd, we proceeded to Geuklú, and, approaching it, marshalled ourselves in procession, preceded by music, songs, and shouts. We alighted at my bride's house, where we partook of refreshments, and received the congratulations of all the village; and then, when everything was prepared for our return to Gavmishlú, where my uncle was to perform the ceremony, we mounted again. My bride, covered by a crimson veil from head to foot, which flowed over a flat platter placed on her crown, was mounted on her father's steed, led on either side by her brothers. It is the custom for the bridegroom to hold a sash or girdle by his right hand, which is held at the other end by the bride, on their way to the church, and this we did. All our friends, our relations, all

the youth of the villages, some on foot, some on asses, others on horses, accompanied the procession, making shouts, and manifesting their joy by all sorts of games and jokes during the whole course of the march. When at length we had reached a small rising ground overlooking my village the procession stopped, and every one who had a part to act in the ceremony received a taper, which was forthwith lighted. The procession then moved on with slow and measured steps, headed by my uncle, who, assisted by my other uncle from the Three Churches, sang psalms as they walked forwards, amidst all the noise of the surrounding lookers-on. The Russian captain had had the attention to dress his men up on the occasion, and they marched to the church with us, adding much to the dignity of the scene.

‘We at length alighted at the door of the church, and, still holding each end of the girdle, my bride and I walked to the foot of the altar, which, notwithstanding our humble condition, had been ornamented with more than ordinary brilliancy by flowers, ribbons, and looking-glasses. My forehead was then placed against Mariam’s in a sort of butting attitude, and the Bible opened and laid upon our heads, whilst her hand was given into mine. The priest then asked, if we agreed to take each other for husband and wife; and after we had made an inclination of our heads as marking our consent, and a suitable proportion of prayers had been read and chanted, the ceremony was at an end, and notified to all the world by the shouts of the multitude, and by the redoubled sounds of our drums, flutes, and tambours.

‘Daylight by this time had entirely disappeared, and the weather, which had threatened a storm, now became very lowering. The sky became darkened, rain fell, and distant thunders were heard. This circumstance put an end to the entertainment given by my father earlier than it otherwise would have done, and when our guests had retired, the hour at length arrived which was to make me the happiest of men.

‘Oh, shall I stop here to recollect all the horrors of that night—or shall I pass on, and not distress you by relating

them? You must conceive my bride lovely as the morning star, innocent as an angel, and attached to me by the purest love; and you may imagine what I felt at that moment,—I who had looked upon my union as impossible, and had thought of my awaiting happiness as a bright spot in my existence, to which I expected never to attain.

‘But in order to give a right impression of the scene which I am about to describe, you must know that the villages in Georgia, and in our part of Armenia, are built partly underground, and thus a stranger finds himself walking on the roof of a house when he thinks that he is on plain ground, the greatest part of them being lighted by apertures at the top. Such was the house in which my family lived, and in which my wedding was celebrated. My nuptial chamber had one of these apertures, which had been closed on the occasion, and was situated with its door leading at once into the open air.

‘It is the custom among the Armenians for the bridegroom to retire first. His shoes and stockings are then taken off by his wife; and, before she resigns her veil, has the task of extinguishing the light. The storm had just broke,—thunders were rolling over our heads,—the lightning flashed,—torrents of rain were pouring down with fearful noise,—there seemed to be a general commotion of the elements, when my Mariam, unveiling herself, extinguished the lamp. She had scarcely laid herself down, when we heard an unusual violent noise at the aperture in the ceiling; sounds of men’s voices were mingled with the crash of the thunder; trampling of horses was also distinctly heard; and presently we were alarmed by a heavy noise of something having fallen in our room and near our bed, accompanied by a glare and a smell of sulphur.

“‘Tis a thunderbolt, by all that is sacred! Oh, heaven protect us!” cried I. “Fly, my soul, my wife, escape!”

‘She had just time to snatch up her veil, and to get without the door, when an explosion took place in the very room, so awful, so tremendous, that I immediately thought myself transported to the regions of the damned. I fell senseless, amidst the wreck of falling stones, plaster, and furniture. All I can

recollect is, that an immense blaze of light was succeeded by an overpowering sulphurous smell,—then a dead silence.

‘I lay there for some time, unconscious of what was passing ; but by degrees came to myself, and when I found that I could move my limbs, and that nothing about my person was materially hurt, I began to consider how I had got there. As for my wedding, that appeared to me a dream : all I heard about me now was the firing of muskets, loud and frequent explosions, cries and shouts of men,—of men wounded and in pain,—of men attacking and putting others to death,—the trampling of horses, the clashing of arms. “What, in the name of Heaven, can all this be?” said I. I still thought myself transported into another planet, when the shriek of a woman struck my ear. “It is Mariam ! It is she, by all that is sacred ! Where, where, shall I seek her?” I was roused : I disencumbered myself of the weight of rubbish that had fallen upon me, and, once upon my legs again, I sallied forth in search of her. The scene which presented itself was more terrible than language can express ; for the first object that struck my sight was a Persian rushing by me, with a drawn sword in one hand, and a human head, dripping with blood, in another. The blackness of the night was lighted up at rapid intervals by vivid flashes of lightning, which, quick as the eye could glance, now discovered the hideous tragedy that was then acting, and now threw it again into darkness, leaving the imagination to fill up the rest. By one flash, I saw Persians, with uplifted swords, attacking defenceless Russians, rushing from their beds : by another, the poor villagers were discovered flying from their smoking cottages, in utter dismay. Then an immense explosion took place, which shook everything around. The village cattle, loosened from their confinements, ran about in wild confusion, and mixed themselves with the horrors of the night : in short, my words fall short of any description that could be made of this awful scene of devastation ; and I must bless the mercy of that almighty hand which hath spared me in the destruction that surrounded me.

‘I knew not where to turn myself to seek for my wife. I

had heard her shrieks ; and the shivering of despair came over me, when I thought it might have been her death-groans which had struck my ears. I threw myself into the midst of the carnage, and, armed with a firebrand, snatched from my burning nuptial chamber, I made my way through the combatants, more like a maniac at the height of his frenzy, than a bridegroom on his wedding-night. Getting into the skirts of the village again, I thought I heard the shrieks of my beloved. I ran towards the direction, and a flash of lightning, that glanced over the adjoining hill, showed me two horsemen making off with a woman, whose white veil was conspicuously seen, mounted behind one of them. Heedless of everything but my wife, I followed them with the swiftness of a mountain goat ; but as the storm subsided, the lightning flashed no more, and I was left in utter darkness at the top of a hill, not knowing which path to take, and whether to proceed or not. I was almost naked, I had been severely bruised. My feet, otherwise accustomed to the naked ground, had become quite lacerated by the pursuit I had undertaken ; and altogether, I was so worn with grief, so broken-hearted, that I hid myself down on the wet earth in a state of desperation that was succeeded by a torpor of all my senses. Here I lay until the first rays of the morning glared in my eyes, and brought me gradually to a sense of my situation.

“What has happened?” said I. “Where am I? How came I here? Either the dæmons and wicked angels of another world have been at work this night, or else I am most grossly abused. To see that glorious orb rising in that clear unclouded sky ; to mark the soothing serenity of nature, the morning freshness, the song of the birds, the lowing of yon cattle, and the quiet and seclusion of my yonder paternal village, I ought to suppose that the images of horror, of indescribable horror, now floating in my mind, must be those of a diseased imagination. Is it possible that in this secluded spot, under this lovely sky, in the midst of these bounteous gifts of nature, I could have seen man murdering his fellow-creature, the blazing cottage, the mangled corse, the bleeding head ;—and oh, cruel,

oh, killing thought, that I should have been bereft of my dear, my innocent wife?" and then, then only, was I restored to a full possession of every occurrence that had taken place; and tears which before had refused to flow now came to my assistance, and relieved my burning temples, and my almost suffocating bosom. I got up, and walked slowly to the village. All was hushed into quiet; a slight smoke was here and there to be seen; stray cattle were grazing on the outskirts; strangers on horseback seemed to be busily employed in preparations of some kind or other, and the wretched peasantry were seen huddled together in groups, scarcely awake from the suddenness of the destruction which had visited them, and uncertain of the fate which might still be in reserve. As for me, the loss which I had already sustained made me expect every other attendant misfortune. I had made my mind up to find my relations dead, to see the total ruin of our house, and to know that I was a solitary outcast on the face of the world, without a wife, without a home, without parents, without a friend. But no, imagination had worked up the picture too highly; for one of the first persons I met on entering our village was my poor mother, who, when she saw me, recollecting all the trouble she had been at to secure my happiness, fell on my neck, and shed a torrent of tears. When her first grief had subsided, she told me that my father had suffered much from bruises, and from a blow received on the head; but that the rest of the family were well: that our house had been considerably injured, many of our things pillaged; and that my nuptial room, in particular, had been almost totally destroyed. She informed me that the good Russian captain had been the first to fall a sacrifice to the attack of the Persians; for almost immediately after the explosion in my room, he had rushed out to see what had happened, when two Persians seized him, one of whom at once decapitated him: this was the head that I saw brandished before me, when first I sallied forth. She then took me to a place of shelter, and put on me what clothes could be found.

'The Persians having completed their deeds of horror, had retired from the scene of action, leaving to our unfortunate

villagers the melancholy task of burying the dead bodies of thirty wretched Russians, who had fallen victims to their treacherous attack, and whose heads they had carried off with them as trophies.

‘After I had visited my father, and left my home in as comfortable a situation as I could, under the existing circumstances, I determined instantly to set out in pursuit of my wife. It was evident that she had been carried away by some of those who had attacked our village, and that she must have been taken to Erivan, as the nearest market for slaves, for such was no doubt the purpose for which she had been seized. My sword, pistols, and gun, which had formed part of the ornamental furniture of my bridal chamber, were found buried in its ruins, and with these for my protection, and with some pieces of silver in my purse, I bid adieu to Gavmishlú, making a vow never to return until I had found my Mariam.

‘I travelled with hurried steps, taking the shortest cuts over the mountains to Erivan, and as I crossed a branch of the high road I met two horsemen, well mounted and equipped, who stopped me, and asked whither I was going, and upon what errand.

‘I did not hesitate to tell them my wretched tale, hoping they might give me some hint which might throw light upon the fate of my wife. This they did indeed, but in a manner so cruel, that their words awakened the most horrid suspicions, and almost to a certainty convinced me that my poor innocent, my hitherto unspotted, though wedded wife, had fallen into the power of a most licentious tyrant.

“Is it possible,” said I, when they had related to me the horrid expedients to which their chief, the Serdar (for it was to two of his body-guard that I was talking), had recourse, for the accomplishment of his wickedness—“is it possible that selfishness can be carried to such an extreme, that vice can have reached to such a pitch in the heart of man? Women, by you Mussulmans, I know are treated as mere accessories to pleasure; but, after all, they are God’s creatures, not made for the Serdar alone, as he seems to think, but given to us to be our help, our comfort, and our companions through life.”

‘My hearers only laughed at my sentiments, and tauntingly assured me, that if I was seeking one who had got into the Serdar’s harem, my labour would be in vain, and that I might just take the trouble to return whence I came.

‘Little heeding what they said, I hastened my steps, without knowing why or wherefore ; but impelled by a sort of feeling, that it could not be in the wisdom of the Almighty to heap such a load of misfortunes upon a wretched sinner like me, without at length giving some counter-balancing reward, as some consolation which I knew it to be in His power to bestow.

‘I was now near the camp of Aberan, where I knew the Serdar in person was settled, and, hoping to hear some favourable intelligence, I made towards it. It was greatly agitated by the arrival of the detachment of Persians who had attacked our village, and were giving proofs of the success of their enterprise, by exhibiting the Russian heads which they had brought away, and which were laid in several heaps before the tent of the chief. One might have supposed that a great and signal victory had been achieved, such were the rejoicings and boastings that took place at the sight. The horrid objects were forthwith salted, and sent off in great parade and ceremony to the Shah of Persia, who never will believe that a victory is gained until he sees these palpable proofs of it. However, in the midst of all this joy, a courier was seen arriving in great haste from the Russian frontier, whose intelligence produced a change of scene. He announced that the Russian Army, having heard of the late attack upon their outpost at Gavmishlô, was now in full march against the Serdar, and coming on so rapidly, that he must expect to be attacked even before night close. The scene that ensued defies all description. The whole camp was ordered to be struck, and an immediate retreat was commanded. Tents falling, mules loading, men screaming ; horses, camels, men, cannon, all were in motion at one time ; and before two hours had elapsed, the whole had disappeared, and the army was on its march for Erivan.

‘I had in the meanwhile received no account of my lost

Mariam ; and it was plain that, if in the power of the Serdar, she was within the walls of his seraglio at Erivan. Thither then I bent my steps, hoping that in this great confusion something might turn up for my advantage.

‘Upon my arrival there, I posted myself at the bridge over the Zengui, from whence I had a full survey of that part of the Serdar’s palace which contains his women ; and as the troops were crossing it at the same time in constant succession, I was unnoticed, and passed for one of the camp-followers. The building is situated upon the brink of a precipice of dark rock, at the foot of which flows the Zengui, a clear and rapid stream, foaming through a rocky bed, the stony projections of which form white eddies, and increase the rush of its waters. A bridge of three arches is here thrown over it, and forms part of the high road leading to Georgia and Turkey. The principal saloon of the palace, in a corner of which the Serdar is usually seated, opens with a large casement on the river, and overlooks the rugged scenery. At some distance on the same surface of building are the windows of the women’s apartments, distinguished by their lattices, and by other contrivances of jealousy. However, I observed that they were not so well secured, but that objects passing and repassing the bridge might well be seen from them ; and I imagined that if Mariam was a prisoner there, she might perchance make me out as I stood below. “But if she did, what then ?” said I to myself in despair : “seeing me there would only add to her torture, and to my desperation.” To escape from such a height appeared impossible, for a fall would be instant death ; and excepting a willow tree, which grew out of the rock immediately under one of the windows, there was nothing to break the descent. However, having remained in one spot so long in meditation, I feared to be observed ; and left my post for the present, determining to return to it at the close of day, and indeed at every hour when I could appear without suspicion.

‘I had been watching the windows of the seraglio in this manner for more than a fortnight, and had not ceased to parade up and down the bridge at least three times every day, when

one evening, as the day was about to close, I saw the lattice of the window over the willow-tree open, and a female looking out of it. I watched her with breathless suspense. She appeared to recognise me. I extended my hand; she stretched forth hers. "It is she!" said I; "yes, it must be her! It is my Mariam!" Upon which, without a moment's hesitation, without thinking of the consequences, I plunged into the river, and having waded through it, stood at the foot of the precipice immediately under my beloved wife. She stretched her arms several times towards me, as if she would have thrown herself out. I almost screamed with apprehension; and yet the hope of pressing her to my heart made me half regret that she had not done so. We stood there looking wistfully at each other fearing to speak, yet longing to do so. At length she shut the lattice suddenly, and left me in an attitude and in all the horrors of suspense. I kept my post for some time without seeing anything more of her, when again suddenly the lattice opened, and she appeared, but with looks that spoke intense agitation. I scarcely could tell what was about to happen, but waited in dreadful anxiety, until I saw her lean forward, retreat, lean forward again—then more and more, until, by a sudden effort, I beheld her fair form in the air, falling down the giddy height. My legs refused to perform their office, my eyes were obscured by a swimming, and I should have probably sunk under the intenseness of my feelings, when I saw her half suspended, half falling, from a branch of the willow-tree. I bounded up, and in an instant had mounted the tree, and had clasped her senseless in my arms. I seemed to be impelled by new vigour and strength; to reach the ground, to recross the river, to fly with my precious burthen from the inhabited outskirts into the open country, appeared but the business of a second. I was perfectly drunk with the thousand feelings which agitated me; and although I acted like one bereft of his senses, yet everything I did was precisely that which I ought to have done. Nature guided me: the animal acting only from instinct would have done like me. I had saved that which was most precious to me in this world.

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‘When I had worn out my first efforts of strength, and had felt that my hitherto senseless burthen showed some symptoms of life, I stopped, and placed her quietly on the ground behind some broken walls. She was terribly bruised, although no bone had been broken. The branches of the tree, upon which she had alighted, had wounded her deeply in several places, and the blood had flowed very copiously. But she was alive ; she breathed ; she opened her eyes, and at length pronounced my name. I was almost crazy with joy, and embraced her with a fervour that amounted to madness. When she had reposed herself a little, I snatched her up again, and proceeded onwards with all the haste imaginable, in the determination to strike at once into the mountains ; but recollecting that I had the river of Ashtarek to cross, and that with her in my arms it would be impossible to do so except by the bridge, I at once directed my steps thither.

‘We were reposing at the foot of the bridge, when I heard the footsteps of your horses. Although nearly exhausted with my previous exertions, I still had strength enough left to clamber up the bank, and take refuge in the ruined church, where you first discovered us ; and there I watched your motions with the greatest anxiety, concluding that you were a party sent in pursuit of us by the Serdar. Need I say after this, that if you will protect us, and permit us to seek our home, you will receive the overflowing gratitude of two thankful hearts, and the blessings of many now wretched people, who by our return will be made supremely happy ? Whoever you are, upon whatever errand you may be sent, you cannot have lost the feelings of a man. God will repay your kindness a thousand times ; and although we are not of your faith and nation, still we have prayers to put up at the Throne of Grace, which must be received when they are employed in so good a cause.’

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HAIJI BABA OF ISPAHAN

JAMIE S. MORIER

